PC GAMES

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10

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW!

ALIENS

Could this be the scariest game ever?

BIOFORGE

Half-man... Half-machine... Half-decent? Review inside!

PLAY BIOFORGE NOW!
It's just one of the brilliant demos on this packed CD!

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A Movie Master MPEG card worth £380!

NO CD?
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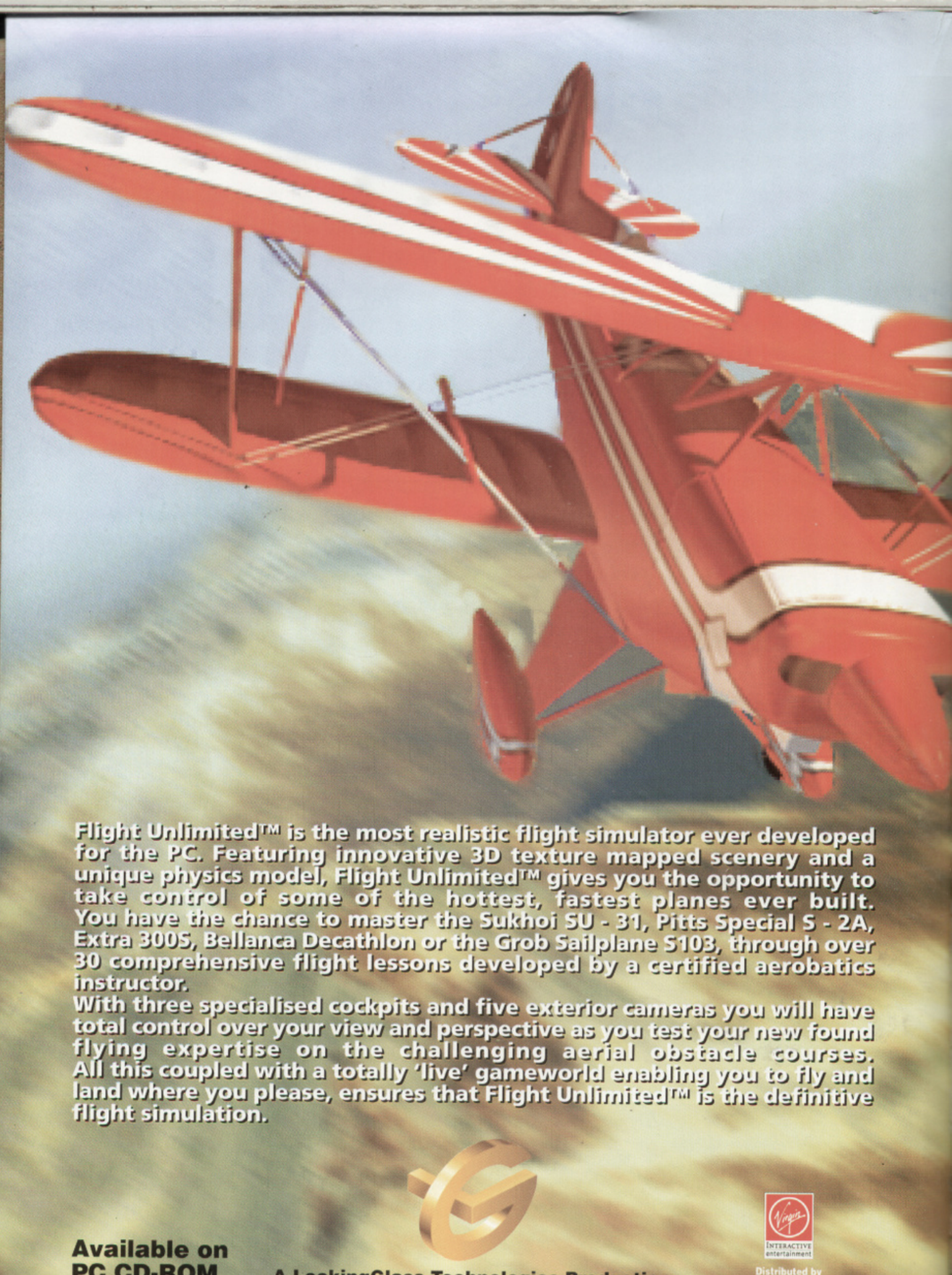
REVIEWED! SuperKarts ● Mortal Kombat 2 ● Lost Eden ● Jungle Strike ● Bureau 13 ● And more!
PREVIEWED! Apache ● Top Gun!
PLUS! Alone In The Dark 3 solved!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With three specialised cockpits and five exterior cameras you will have total control over your view and perspective as you test your new found flying expertise on the challenging aerial obstacle courses. All this coupled with a totally 'live' gameworld enabling you to fly and land where you please, ensures that Flight Unlimited™ is the definitive flight simulation.
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When I'm not being a Star Wars saddo, I'm an Aliens addict — so I'm as excited as you by our fantastic preview of Cryo's Aliens this issue. Although Cryo's past games have had a tendency to be a triumph of graphics over gameplay, Aliens looks set to get the balance between looks and playability just right — why not turn to page 26 and read the feature now if you don't believe me? (However, if you're reading this bit in a shop, I'd prefer you to buy the magazine first!)

Apart from Aliens, I'm also rather excited by Origin's fabulous BioForge, which is reviewed in-depth on page 46 and is also demoed on our fantastic CoverCD. BioForge, of course, had the seminal honour of being the first game to feature on a cover of PC GAMES way back in May of last year, and it's good to see that our predictions about it being a massive hit seem more than likely to come true — because it's brilliant!

But even if you're not a fan of Aliens or Alone In The Dark-style games, there's plenty more to enjoy in this issue. We've got some stunning sneak previews of all the new games from Gremlin and Millennium, an exclusive look at MicroProse's Top Gun, reviews of Flight Of The Amazon Queen, SuperKarts and Ticonderoga, a special feature on the new companies entering the software industry... In fact, too much to list here. Why not get reading?

David Upchurch,
Editor.

WIN! *A Movie Master 24-bit MPEG card! Turn to page 110 NOW!*

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...Or Disc!, as you may prefer to call this part of the mag if you've got the CD-ROM Edition of PC GAMES. Whatever, here's where you find out how to play our excellent demos...

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Editor David Upchurch ● *Art Editor* Dave Kelsall ● *Reviews Editor* Dean Evans ● *Staff Writer* Alex Simmons ● *Designer* Peter Barrell ● *Contributors* Christina Erskine, Lucy Hickman ● *Cover Illustration* Simon Bisley ● *Internal Illustrations* Karl Richardson, Colin Parker ● *Systems Manager* Sarah-Jane Leavy ● *Advertising Manager* Marie Lawlor ● *Advertising Production* Tina Gynn ● *Editorial Director* David Kelly ● *Managing Director* Terry Pratt ● *Editorial and Advertising Offices* Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU; Tel: (0171) 972 6700, Fax: (0171) 972 6710 ● *Distribution* Frontline Ltd, Park Road, Peterborough PE1 2TR; Tel: (01733) 555161 ● *Subscriptions* Tower Publishing, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill St, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 9EF; Tel: (01858) 468888. Annual subscription rates (12 issues, incl. postage): UK & BFPO — £47.40(HD)/£59.40(CD); Overseas surface mail — £55(HD)/£67(CD); Airmail Europe & Eire — £65(HD)/£77(CD); Airmail Zones 1 & 2 — £95(HD)/£107(CD) ● Printed by TPL, 111 Hartlebury Trading Estate, Hartlebury, Nr Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 4JB ● *MonitorMan™ Logo* The Designers Republic

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...When you subscribe to PC GAMES!
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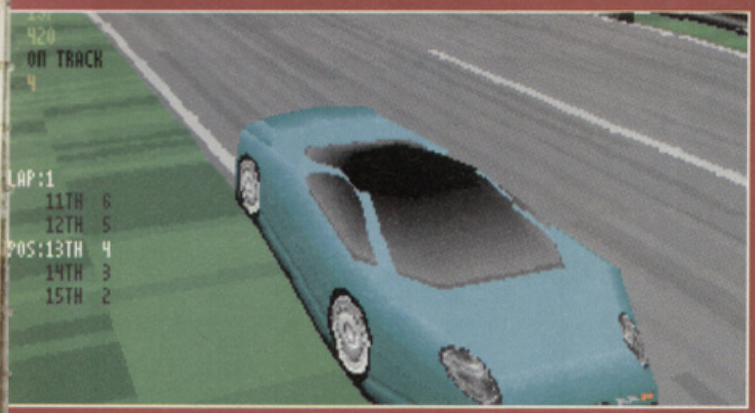

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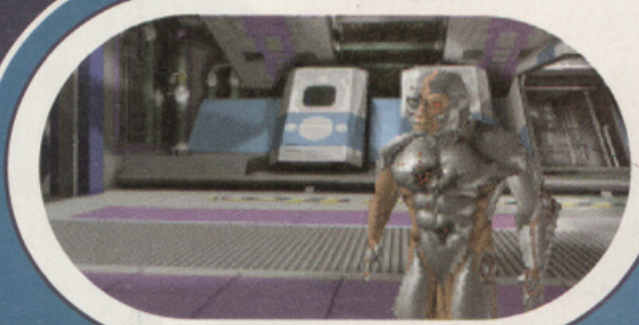
Disks!

Whether you've bought the HD Disk or the CD-ROM Edition of PC GAMES, you'll find plenty of covermounted software sauce-pots to keep you amused, including ClockWerx, the latest puzzler from Alexey Pajitnov, and BioForge, Origin's stunning Alone In The Dark beater!



DISKS!

Forget Catherine Zeta Jones — this month's CD is where you'll find the darling buds of May. Not only do we have white-hot demos of BioForge, Pyrotechnica and Full Throttle, we've also managed to cram the disc with nearly 700Mbs of the best in PC gaming entertainment. Now that's what I call VFM!

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Most of these demos will run on a 486/SX PC (minimum), with VGA, at least 4Mb of RAM, DOS 5.0 or greater and a mouse. However, please note that PyroTechnica needs at least a 486/DX PC, BioForge and Full Throttle require at least 8Mb of RAM, and that ClockWerx needs to be run under Windows 3.1.

How To Load Your Demos

In a move to make your CoverCD and HD disks friendlier than ever, we've standardised the entire thing. Now, the process for loading the games and demos is exactly the same for each.

(1) Loading From The HD Disks

Place the disk in your internal drive, and then log onto it by typing **A:**, **B:** or whatever the drive letter happens to be. Now enter **PCG** to run the disk menu. From here, it all gets easier; simply select the demo you wish to play with the cursor keys, and then press RETURN to install it. You'll be given instructions about how to run each game on the menu screen.

(2) Loading From The CoverCD

Place the CoverCD into your CD-ROM drive and then log onto it by typing **D:**, **E:** or whatever the drive letter happens to be. Now enter **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu.

Demos on the CD take one of two forms — they can either be run direct from the disk or will need to be installed onto your hard drive.The menu item itself will tell you what needs to happen with each demo. To play each of the demos, just select the item you want with the cursor keys, then press RETURN — the rest will be done for you.

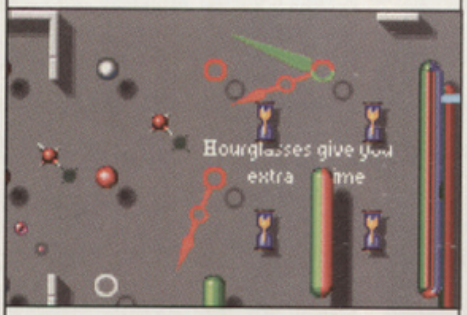
In the case of a Windows game, such asClockWerx, the menu will launch Windows and run the installer for you. You will need to exit Windows to get back to the main menu. Note that you must have set up a path to your Windows directory for this feature to work properly. If you haven't, go to the DOS prompt and enter **PATH=C:\WINDOWS** before running the CoverCD menu, assuming that Windows is stored in the **C:\WINDOWS** directory.

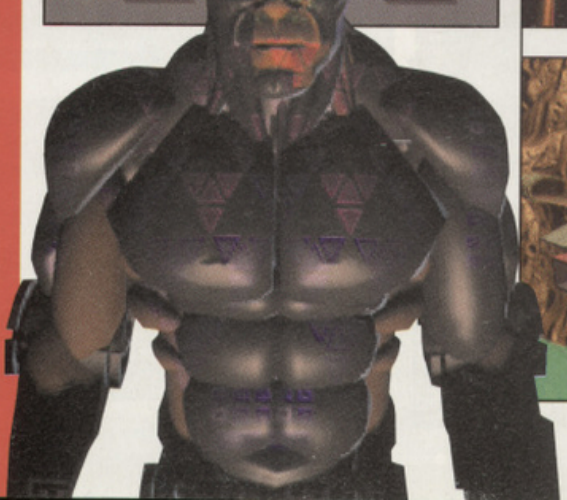
ClockWerx
Spectrum Holobyte

From the creator of Tetris comes this rather fun little puzzle game that's a cross between boxes and the oldy E-Motion. This ten-level demo takes you through all of the basics of the game, and you should find yourself addicted in no time at all!

How To Play

You control a small swinging clock hand which you need to move from its starting position to the Goal Dot, which is marked with a flashing border. To move across the board you need to connect the end of your clock hand with the dot you wish to jump to, and then swing across to it, Tarzan-like. It sounds a little odd on paper, but once you start playing the game, it will all make sense. There are all sorts of things laid out on-screen to stop you, all of which are labelled in this demo, so start it up and start getting hooked.





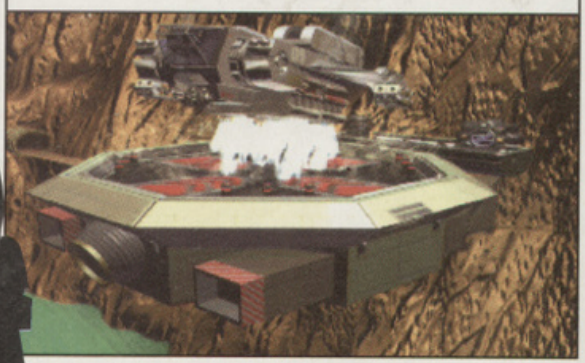
BioForge
Origin

Origin's latest — and quite possibly greatest — game earned itself a healthy 93% in this very issue, and after playing this demo you'll probably begin to understand why. A sort of 'Alone In The Dark meets Total Recall', BioForge casts you as the hapless Lex, a cyborg who has lost his memory and is trapped in a strange complex patrolled by unfriendly security droids and alien guards. Who are you? How did you get there? And why does everybody want to kill you? All these questions and — yes! — more are answered in BioForge!

How To Play

You start this demo trapped in your cell with only a medi-droid for company. Somehow you've got to work out how to escape, so you can explore the rest of the complex. It's as, er, simple as that! Good luck — and remember to examine everything you find along the way. Oh, and the following keys might prove useful too...

Cursor Keys	Walk.
RETURN	Pick up.
SPACE	Use.
SHIFT	Run.
C	Enter combat mode.
In Combat Mode:	
ALT + Keypad	Kick.
CTRL + Keypad	Punch.
5 (on keypad)	Fire blaster (if found).
I	Inventory
D	Diagnostics (current status).
O	Options.



Stardust
Bloodhouse

Some have said that Asteroids was one of the greatest arcade games ever. Well, actually many people have said that, but Asteroids was quite a long time ago. What it needs is a revamp for the 90s, and Finnish coders Bloodhouse were the team that brought it screaming and kicking up to date in their incredible AmigaStardust. Now the game has finally been converted to the PC — and what a game it is! This demo lets you take on two of the early levels of the game, and then moves you into the fantastic tunnel bonus sequence. Play it if you think you're hard enough!

How To Play

The ship is rotated with the left and right cursor keys. Hit the up cursor to thrust, and the down cursor to activate your shields — you only have limited shield energy so use them wisely. SPACE is used to fire your weapon, which can be upgraded by collecting the tokens that fall off some of the asteroids as you disintegrate them. In the tunnel sequence, the left and right cursor keys move your ship across the screen, and the up and down keys make your ship dive and climb respectively. Good luck!

Full Throttle
LucasArts

LucasArts have already shown us in the past how they can put together the best Doom clones, the best space combat simulators, the best graphic adventures and the best movie tie-in games. Now they want to prove that they can supply the best-looking adventure game around with Full Throttle, the tale of a lone Harley rider, out against some of the toughest road gangs in the world.

The entire game is presented as one long interactive cartoon, and before you start groaning about Dragon's Lair and a complete lackof playability, the format of the game means that it's just as playable as it is fun to watch — and it is *great* fun to watch, as you'll find out when you try out this fully-playable segment from the game.

How To Play

The game is controlled with the mouse or keyboard, with the cursor keys moving the main pointer around and SPACE bringing up the icon menu. There are four icons to choose from at any point, and each of these intelligently react with the item you are looking at. For example, the Use icon (the fist on theleft of the panel) will cause you to attack the barman or start your bike, depending on where you are. The other icons in thepanel are: Look (the eyes of the skull), Talk (the mouth of the skull) and Kick (the boot on the right of the icon bank).

Just to get you started, the first thing you need to do in the demo is get out of the skip, which you do by clicking with the left mouse button on the roof of the skip in the middle of the screen. Get out of the skip and walk right off the screen until you reach the outside of the bar. Here, kick in the door, and then talk to the bartender. Attack him, and he'll give you the keys for your bike. After that, you're on your own...

ALERT! ALERT!
My disk is faulty!

Due to the massive number of disks duplicated, the odd one might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand. Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

PC GAMES Bodged Disks,
Diskxpress,
Unit 7, Willow Court,
Bourton Industrial Park,
Bourton-on-the-water,
Gloucestershire GL54 2HQ.

If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on **(01451) 810788**. The helpline is open between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays.

Making A Boot Disk

If you're having problems running any of this month's floppy games try making a boot disk. Take a freshly formatted floppy disk, slap it into the disk drive (I'll assume it's drive A for the moment) and type: **SYS A:**. The system files will be transferred and within seconds you'll have a fully-functioning boot disk on your hands.

All you then need to do is leave the floppy in the disk drive, reset your PC and finally try loading the game again. Don't take the disk out of the machine as it boots up because you want the PC to read the information from the floppy rather than the hard disk.

What the... HELP!

All these demos require 4Mb of Expanded (EMS) memory to run and at least 590K of free base memory, except where stated otherwise in the System Requirements panel opposite. If you have this, not Extended memory (XMS), they shouldn't cause you any problems whatsoever.

● Except where specified, these demos do not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software.

The Fine Print Bit...

The PC GAMES coverdisks are rigorously checked for viruses, but coverdisks are used at the reader's own risk. PC GAMES can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by using the coverdisks.

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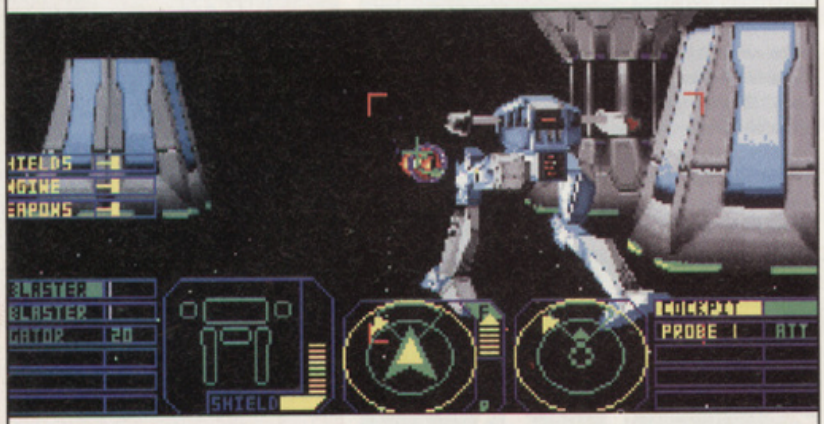
BattleDrome
Dynamix

Battledrome is a virtual robot combat simulator. Once you set up your fighting vehicle, or HERC, you challenge an opponent to a match. When an opponent accepts your challenge, you will negotiate a wager and combat conditions, and then proceed to the Arena to battle for the agreed-upon prize money. As you win prize money, you will be able to buy better weapons, and will be able to challenge better opponents. You cannot buy new HERCs in this demo version.

How To Play

The game is controlled with the joystick or keyboard. What follows is a list of all the keys used in the game. For more information on the demo and how to play it, check the **README** document on the CD in the Battle directory by logging on to your CD-ROM directory and typing **CD BATTLE** followed by **README**.



Arena Controls

Esc	Surrender match.
ALT+P or F12	Preferences.
CTRL+J	Calibrate joystick.
F8	Brighten screen.
CTRL+Q	Quit to DOS.

View Control

F1	Cockpit.
F2-F5	Probes.
A	Attach probe on/off.
ALT+N	Next probe.
TAB	Toggle control between HERC/probe.

Controlling Attached Probes

Cursor Keys	Move around HERC.
Up/down+ >	Zoom in/out.

Controlling Detached Probe

Cursor Keys	Change view direction.
>	Probe forward.
<	Probe backwards.

HERC Control

INSert/Button 2	Change between HERC/turret.
Up/Down Cursors	Forward/reverse.
Left/Right Cursors	Left/right.
[	HERC left.
]	HERC right.
I	Turret up.
M	Turret down.
J	Turret left.
K	Turret right.
BACKSPACE	Turret centred.

Throttle

0	Zero.
-	Decrease.
+	Increase.
/	Full or reverse.

Weapon Control

SPACE	Fire next weapon.
1-6	Single-fire weapon.
ALT+1-6	Add/remove weapon from chain.

Heads-Up Display (HUD)

U	HUD on/off.
CTRL+U	Reset HUD.
E	Energy allocation.
X	Shields to 80%.
SHIFT+X	Shields +10%.
CTRL+X	Shields -10%.
C	Engine to 80%.
SHIFT+C	Engine +10%.
CTRL+C	Engine -10%.
V	Weapons to 80%.
SHIFT+V	Weapons +10%.
CTRL+V	Weapons -10%.
Z	Balance energy.
W	Weapons display.
T	Target info.
B	View/control status.
H	Throttle/heading.
P	Probe list.
O	Probe orientation.
D	Damage/shield.
S	Internal systems status.
G	Game message display.

Noctropolis
Electronic Arts

Noctropolis is a bizarre graphic adventure set in a weird world of comic strip heroes and heroines. It's got a very unique, surreal look, blending digitised sprites with hand-drawn backdrops to create a universe almost — but not quite — like our own. And now you can sample it in this excellent demo, with features a healthy portion of the game laced with stunning special effects and full speech throughout!

How To Play

Anyone who has played a graphic adventure some time in the last ten years should soon feel right at home with Noctropolis. Everything is mouse driven — simply click on the right mouse button to bring up the icon 'pyramid', choose a command with the left mouse button, then click on the screen with the left mouse button again to activate the command.

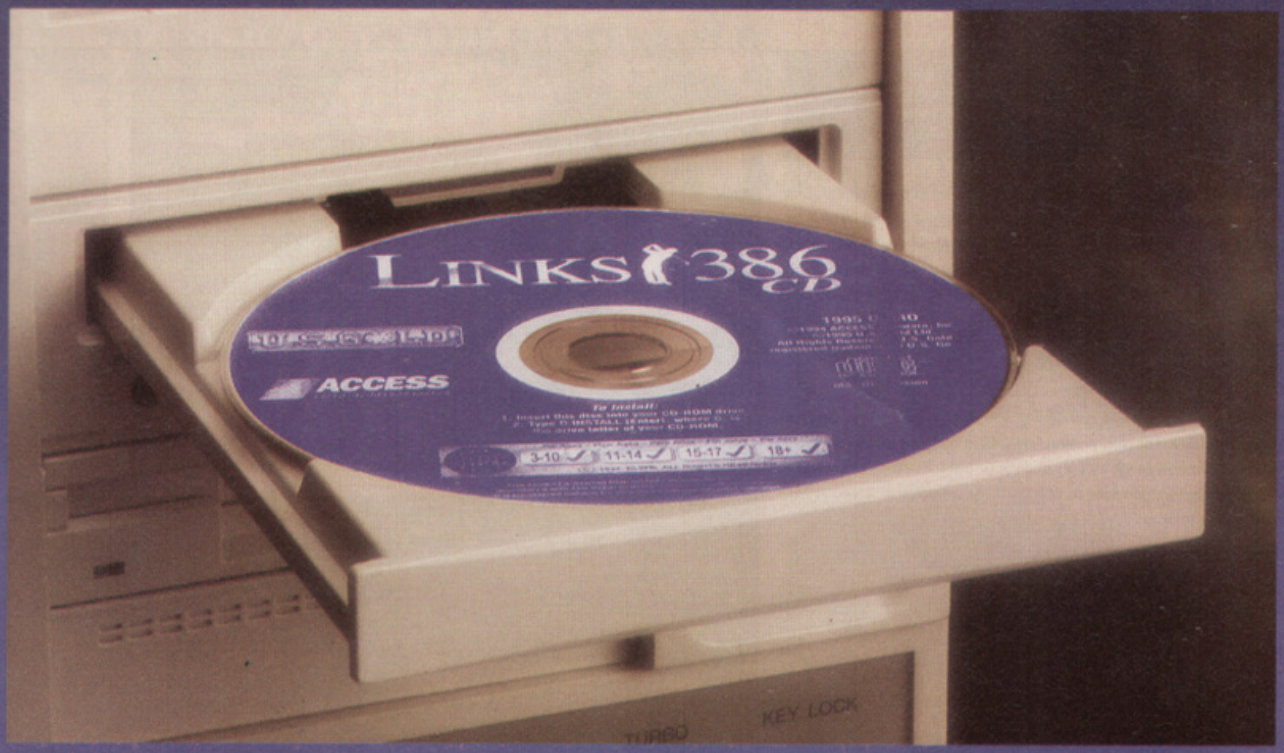
Your task in this demo is to get from your boring office to the magical realm of Noctropolis. But how? Well, we don't want to give the game away, but suffice it to say that you shouldn't listen to your mother who says reading comics is bad for you...

Lost Eden
Virgin Interactive

Cryo's magnificent 3D adventure set in Jurassic times is a masterful piece of rendered art, and features some of the most stunning images yet seen in any game. Those wacky French guys are so pleased with the fruits of their labour that they have released this absolutely huge 200Mb demo of the game, featuring many of the cut-scenes from the game as well as a completely playable segment. Sit back and enjoy!

How To Play

The entire demo is played with the mouse, and couldn't be more simple to control. As you move the mouse pointer around the screen, it changes to show you how you can interact with various objects. Move it over a door, for example, and it turns into a rotating box with an arrow marked on each of the faces — this tells you that you can walk forward (or whatever direction the arrows are facing) through that door. Similarly, placing the piunter over a person enters you into a conversation with them, and placing it over an object will either let you examine or collect it.



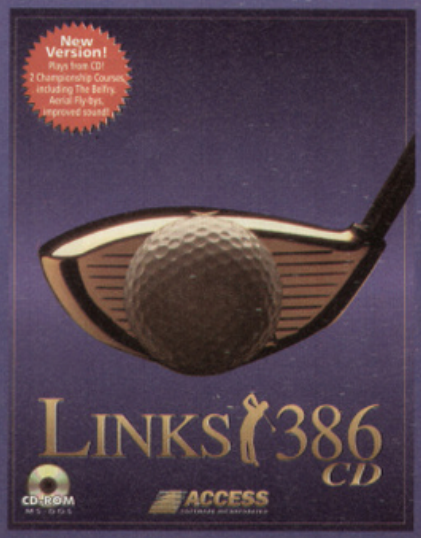
' THE PERFECT DRIVE '

The perfect golf simulation deserves the perfect PC platform. Now the most award winning golf game in software history has been enhanced for CD.

The Belfry ~ Harbour Town

The new Links 386 CD features Harbour Town Golf Links as well as The Ryder Cup venue, The Belfry.

Links 386 CD includes an entirely new digital sound system and simulated aerial fly-bys of each hole, allowing you to assess the challenge from the air. All other Links Championship Courses are playable with Links 386 CD, creating a complete golfing experience.



The Perfect Golf Simulation. The Perfect Drive...

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PERFECTION
PERFECTED

ACCESS
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Minimum Requirements: 386sx IBM PC, 4MB RAM, 16MB Hard drive space, Double speed CD-ROM drive, MS-DOS 5.1, SVGA monitor, Mouse, Sound Card recommended. Screenshots are only intended to be illustrative of the game play and not the screen graphics which may vary considerably between different formats in quality and are subject to the computer's specifications. ©1992-95 Access Software, Inc. All rights reserved. Published by U.S. Gold Ltd., Units 2-3 Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 0121 625 3366. U.S. Gold is a registered trademark of U.S. Gold Ltd. The image of Big Bertha on the front of the packaging is used with permission of Callaway Golf. Big Bertha is a registered trademark of Callaway Golf.

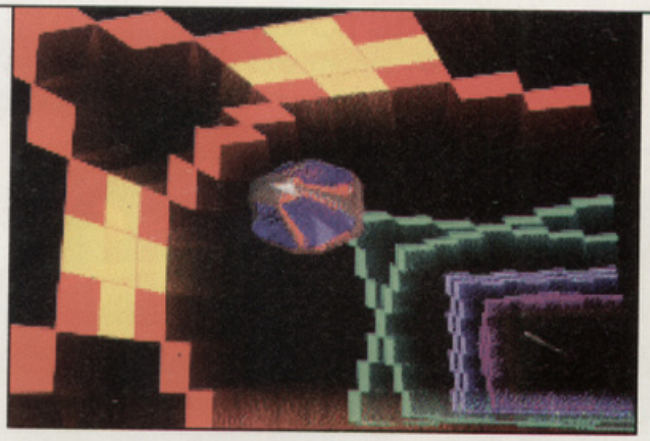
PyroTechnica
Psygnosis

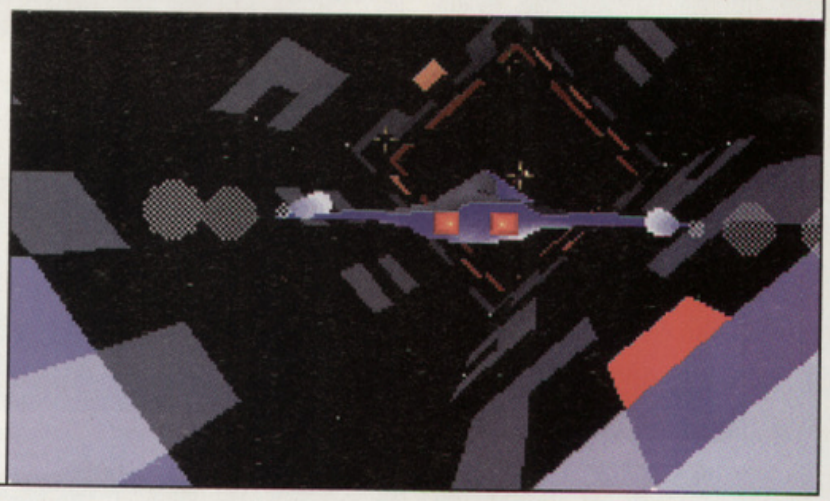
Everyone is talking about the transfer of information at the moment, and particularly the freedom of that information. Superhighways and infobahns are buzzwords of the highest order, but what happens when all that information gets out of hand? In the year 2112, Psygnosis predict, we will find information capsules buried deep within the hearts of ancient stars, and you're going to need slightly more than a modem and a copy of Winsock to get hold of this stuff.

How To Play

At the start of the demo you are shown a plan map of the star you are going to try and retrieve the information from. After that, it's all heads down for the interstellar showdown as you pilot your ship through beautifully-rendered three-dimensional space in search of that all-elusive data packet. The controls are as follows:

Cursor keys	Move left, right, up and down.
Space	Fire primary weapon.
S	Fire secondary weapon.
F1-F4	Select primary weapon.
F5-F8	Select secondary weapon.
0-9	Set speed.
W	Weapon view.
E	External/internal view.
R	Rotate view.
P	Pause game
F	Release flares.
C	Release chaff.
B	Brakes.
M	Map.
ESC	Launch escape pod.
H	High-score table.





Flight Of The Amazon Queen
Renegade

Yes, we ran this demo a couple of months ago, but this time we've really got something special from the boys down under (and our sister magazine PC Review). This is the full talking CD version of the game, with all of your favourite characters played it out in full stereo audio. We're not Joe King! (Joking, get it?)

How To Play

The game is played in the same way as most graphic adventures, with a row of icons at the bottom of the screen which are used in conjunction with items on the main screen. For example, to tie the bedsheets together to make a rope, you would click on the Use icon, and then on one of the bedsheets. The game will then prompt you for an item to use the sheet with, and you then click on the other bedsheet. It's all fairly straight-forward.

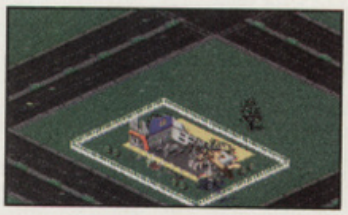
Jungle Strike
Gremlin Interactive

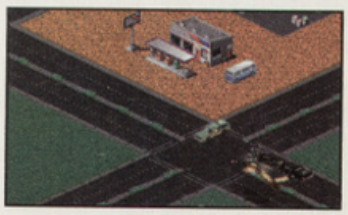
The follow-up to the highly-successful Desert Strike is about to hit your PC, courtesy of Gremlin Interactive — and here's a demo mission from that up-and-coming game to show you just how good it really is. As before, you are flying a lone helicopter gunship into hostile territory, with the aim of wiping out the enemy resources and rescuing all of the hostages kept there. The difference this time is that the enemy is based in the jungle.

How To Play

The game is played with the joystick or keyboard, with the following keys used to control your chopper:

Cursor Keys	Moves the craft around.
Z, X, C	Fires the three on-board weapon systems (cannons, missiles, homing missiles).
ALT	When used in conjunction with the cursor keys, this key lets you 'jink'.
F1	Brings up a status panel.





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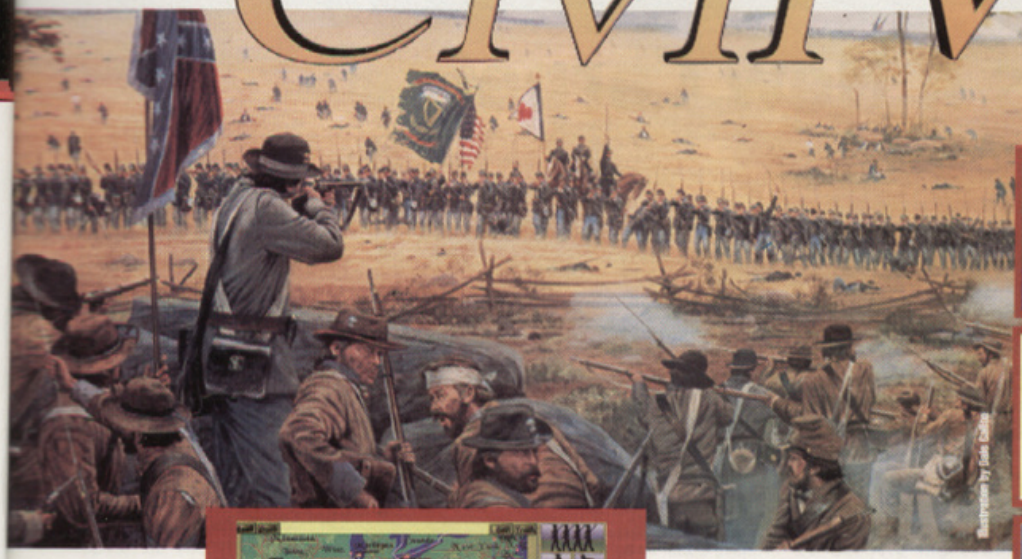
The Civil War



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NEWS

Bullfrog Lays **A New Carpet**

Word has leaked out from Bullfrog's Guildford HQ that a sequel to Magic Carpet is on the way and due for release this Autumn. Okay, so given the huge success of the first game, its not exactly the most surprising revelation ever to grace PC GAMES's news pages, but it's certainly one of the most exciting.

According to Bullfrog, Magic Carpet 2 will feature an enhanced 3D engine, allowing the player to fly through night-shrouded landscapes and underground caverns. The gameplay will be tweaked too — unlike the first game, in which players went on the Arabian equivalent of a trolley dash in search of Mana, the sequel will be more structured, with each level taking the form of a mystical quest to find a magical key, kill a certain monster or whatever. Naturally, there will also be a wealth of new spells and incantations, allowing the player to cause death and destruction like never before. Bullfrog is naturally unkeen to give too much away this early, but we hope to have more news next issue...

While on the subject of Bullfrog, we've also learnt that Syndicate 2 is now called Syndicate Wars. Again, we hope to have more info on this eagerly-awaited sequel next month. Stay, as they say, tuned...

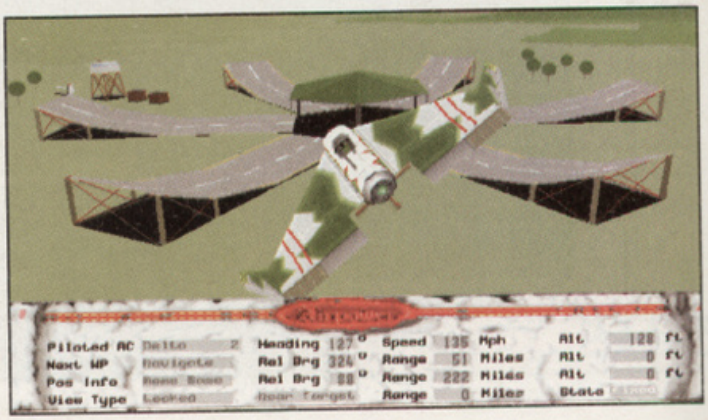
Fight The *Power!*

Well, this is different! Mindscape's Air Power, which is being coded by sim specialists Rowan Software, is a flight sim cum strategy game set in a bizarre Jules Verne-inspired fantasy world, in which battling barons wage eternal war on each while flying around in giant airships. These massive dirigibles are sort of like floating aircraft carriers, as each carries a payload of rickety balsa-'n'-string biplanes and triplanes which are launched from hangars inside the balloon's cavernous belly.

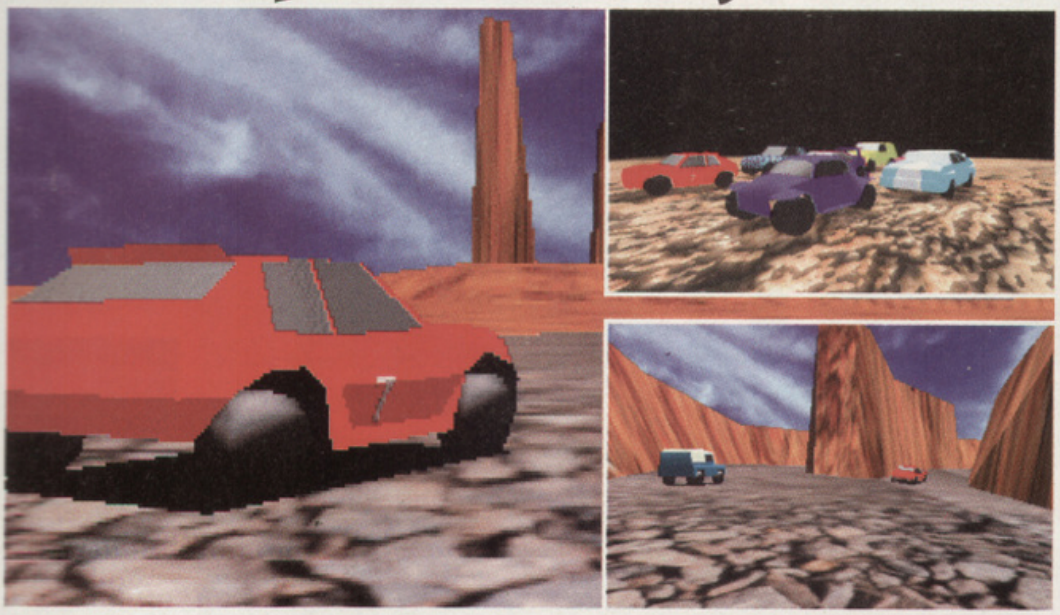
The aim of the game is simply to become ruler of the World. Naturally, this entails lots of strategic planning as you attack and take control of enemy-owned towns and villages, gradually building up the resources which enable you to construct a bigger, more powerful airfleet.

The combat side of things promises to be very special too. Rowan are past-masters of nifty SVGA-mode 3D graphics (as seen in their previous, more historically-accurate fare like Virgin's Overlord and Empire's Dawn Patrol), and they've used their skills to great effect here, creating some unique-looking and fabulously detailed aircraft for the player to fly against the enemy.

Air Power is due for release early this Summer, so we should have a preview of it for you in the next month or so.



Team 17 *Gets Ready to Roll*



October 1995 will see the release of Team 17's first 3D racing game — and what a corker it's shaping up to be!

Rollcage has been in development since June 1994, with most of that time spent on the creation of a super-smooth texture-mapped 3D graphics engine. "With Rollcage, we are using state-of-the-art graphics to fully involve the player or players in a realistic and fun driving game," enthuses Mat Cook, the game's coder. "My physics degree comes in handy for simulating moving cars, and Dan[Cook, the graphic artist]'s photography and design background is useful for making the game as realistic as possible."

Rollcage already boasts an impressive set of features. Its detailed graphics may look processor-intensive, but Team 17 is promising the game will shift at 15 frames a second on a lowly 486/33, increasing to up to 70 frames per second on a Pentium! The action is spread across 20 courses, ranging from the more typical snow drifts and grasslands to stunt tracks and canyons, and there's even a multi-storey car park in there somewhere!.

This Autumn will see the release of a number of 3D racers, each promising to be very impressive indeed, so Rollcage certainly has its work cut out if it's to prove a winner with PC gamers. But with a serial link option capable of pitting up to six human players against each other, and a liberal sprinkling of the inimitable Team 17 magic, this could just be the one to back.

Pump Up the Volume

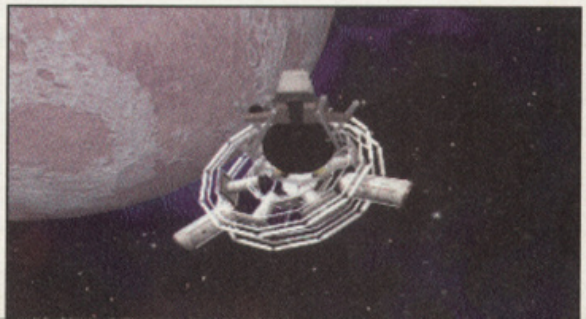
We remember the crass 1980s when big used to be best. People would try to out-do each other with larger stereos, longer cars and obscenely large speakers. Alas, those days are gone and in the eco-friendly '90s it seems small is most definitely beautiful. Unless you're Jimmy Crankee, of course.

Tye Technology's Easy 5 speakers continue this trend. Priced at a pocket-gratifying price of £19.99, these small but perfectly formed sound amplifiers won't shatter the bank, but offer quality output without the 'tinny' sound associated with cheap goods. Splash out on these tiny fellas and you'll have enough cash left for some marshmallow shrimps and tacky candy fags.

Virus Strain

Yes, so graphic adventures are ten-a-penny — but few look quite so lush as ICE's forthcoming Alien Virus. It's a space-bound mystery in which you play a lone pilot flying home for a passionate rendezvous with 'your girl'. However, when you reach the space station where she works, you find it mysteriously deserted. As you explore you gradually learn that (a) something's amiss (clever!) and (b) that there's something not quite, er, human roaming the station's corridors. Will you be able to find your lost love before she ends up as a xenomorph's dinner...?

Featuring dozens of locations all rendered in sensational SVGA, oodles of animated cut-scenes, full speech through-out and hours of puzzle-solving point-'n'-click gameplay, Alien Virus promises to be a corker. Indeed, ICE is so confident of the game's success that it's already working on not one, not two but *three* sequels! And you can find out if that confidence is well-founded when we review Alien Virus next issue.



Team Talk

Who are the geezas who write PC GAMES? And just what or who has taken their fancy this month? All is revealed below...

David Upchurch
Editor

Dave came back from visiting Gremlin in a right old state. "Wow," he said. "They've got some top stuff in development, including a game that looks just like Ridge Racer!" Dave likes racing games, mainly because he doesn't drive in real life —nobody's yet built a car big enough to contain his huge bulk.

Dean Evans
Reviews Editor

Dean was delighted to be the one chosen to review Football Glory this month. He normally wastes countless hours of his working day playing World Of Sensible Soccer on the Amiga with the boys from The One magazine (Dave's old haunt), but now he can do the same on his PC — and pretend that he's working at the same time!

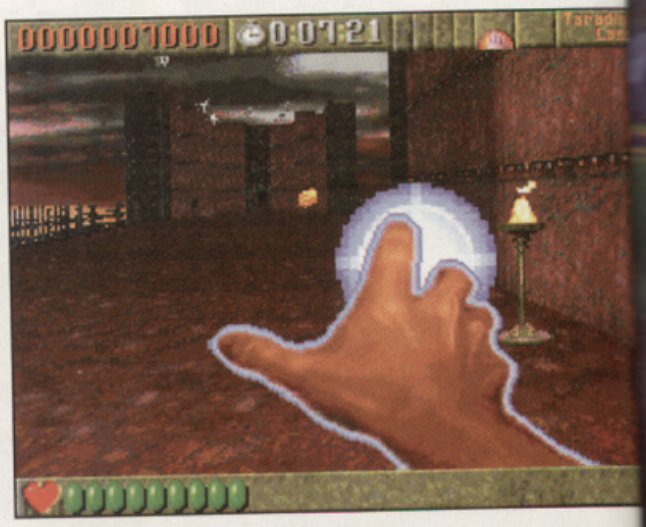
Alex Simmons
Staff Writer

Alex, being half-man, half-writing machine, sympathised heavily with Lex's tragic plight in this month's top-rated game, BioForge — even their names are similar. Alex hasn't, of course, been kidnapped by aliens and had his body bio-mechanically altered — at least, so far as we're aware.

David Kelsall
Art Editor

Dave was really looking forward to the Atari 2600 Action Pack, and was disappointed by it when it eventually arrived in the office. "If it's made me realise one thing," sighed misty-eyed Dave, "it's that I shouldn't bang on about the old games all the time. They weren't all classics..."

Rise To The *Challenge...*



Rise Of The Triad, Apogee's ultra-violent Doom clone, has been snapped up by US Gold for commercial distribution to blood-hungry PC owners.

To be fair, 'Doom-clone' undersells ROTT, as it's one of the better first-person 3D blasters to burst onto the software scene, leaving the likes of Corridor 7, Virtuoso, Cyclones et al quivering in a heap of blood, guts and entrails. And in some ways, the game is more violent than Doom, featuring the most realistic exploding eyeballs we've ever seen. Effects such as transparent windows (that can, of course, be blown away), moving walls, fog and lightning bring the on-screen action to life and there are literally hundreds of traps, puzzles and mazes to negotiate.

You can play as one of five characters — each with their own unique abilities — and the game will support network play with up to 11 players able to pump each other full of lead. The best features, though, are the intelligent guards that have graphic ways of dying. The aforementioned flying eyeballs are the most fun, but other Triad members will 'play dead' and leap up, guns a-blazing, when you least expect it, or slump to their knees and plead with you not to kill them (for this purpose, pretending you're deaf usually works a treat).

The Shareware version went down a treat, but the full game's 32 levels and five new types of enemy (in the CD version only, though) should ensure that Rise Of The Triad: Dark War is one of US Gold's most successful games of '95.

Bundles Of Joy From Zye

Hardware manufactures, eh? God bless 'em, that's what we say here at PC GAMES. Especially when they try to flog us their wares by declaring that their latest 'pads' are ideal for games like Mortal Combat (sic).

Still, if you're looking for a new 'stick or 'pad' then you could do worse than Zye Technology's latest trio of game controllers.

Turbo Power and Quick Action (sound like Swedish, er, 'art' films to us) are both reasonably priced at £19.99. The first is a console-style pad with turbo buttons, ideal for most misspelt combat games, while Quick Action is a more traditional joystick with a pressure sensitive trigger button and — yes! — full documentation.

If beating the Joneses is your thing then the top of the range True Fire, pictured here, should suffice. Weighing in at a hefty £29.99 (including VAT), this ergonomically-designed stick guarantees a fast and accurate response.

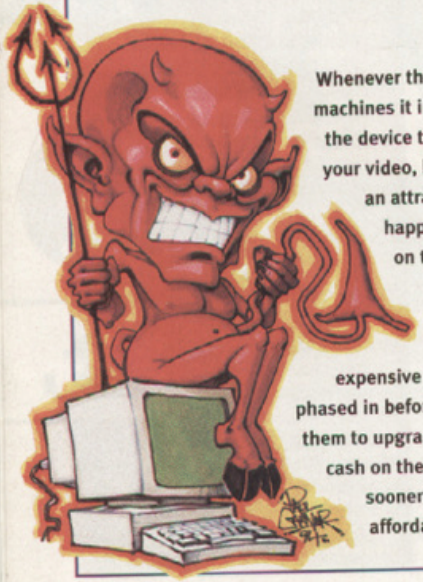
All three joysticks are available from most decent outlets, and should be in the shops now.

Only A Few *Strings Attached*

Virgin has just announced that it has teamed up with Disney once more and secured the rights to another well-loved children's animated movie from Uncle Walt's huge stable. Pinocchio, the tale of the puppet with an ever-growing nose who wants to become a 'real' boy, has so far only been confirmed to appear on the major home console formats, but given that PC conversions of Aladdin, The Lion King and the soon-to-be-released Jungle Book have all been announced a few months later, it's not unreasonable to assume that we'll be treated to our own version before the end of the year.

The whole entertainment industry is talking about it, but do the public really want it? Well, this computer-playing little devil certainly doesn't. As far as I'm concerned...

"The 'black box' *can bog off!"*



Whenever the national press focuses on CD-ROM machines it inevitably mentions the 'black box' — the device that, it claims, will eventually replace your video, hi-fi and computer. While it remains an attractive proposition, it will never, ever happen. Why? Because yer average man on the street does not want it.

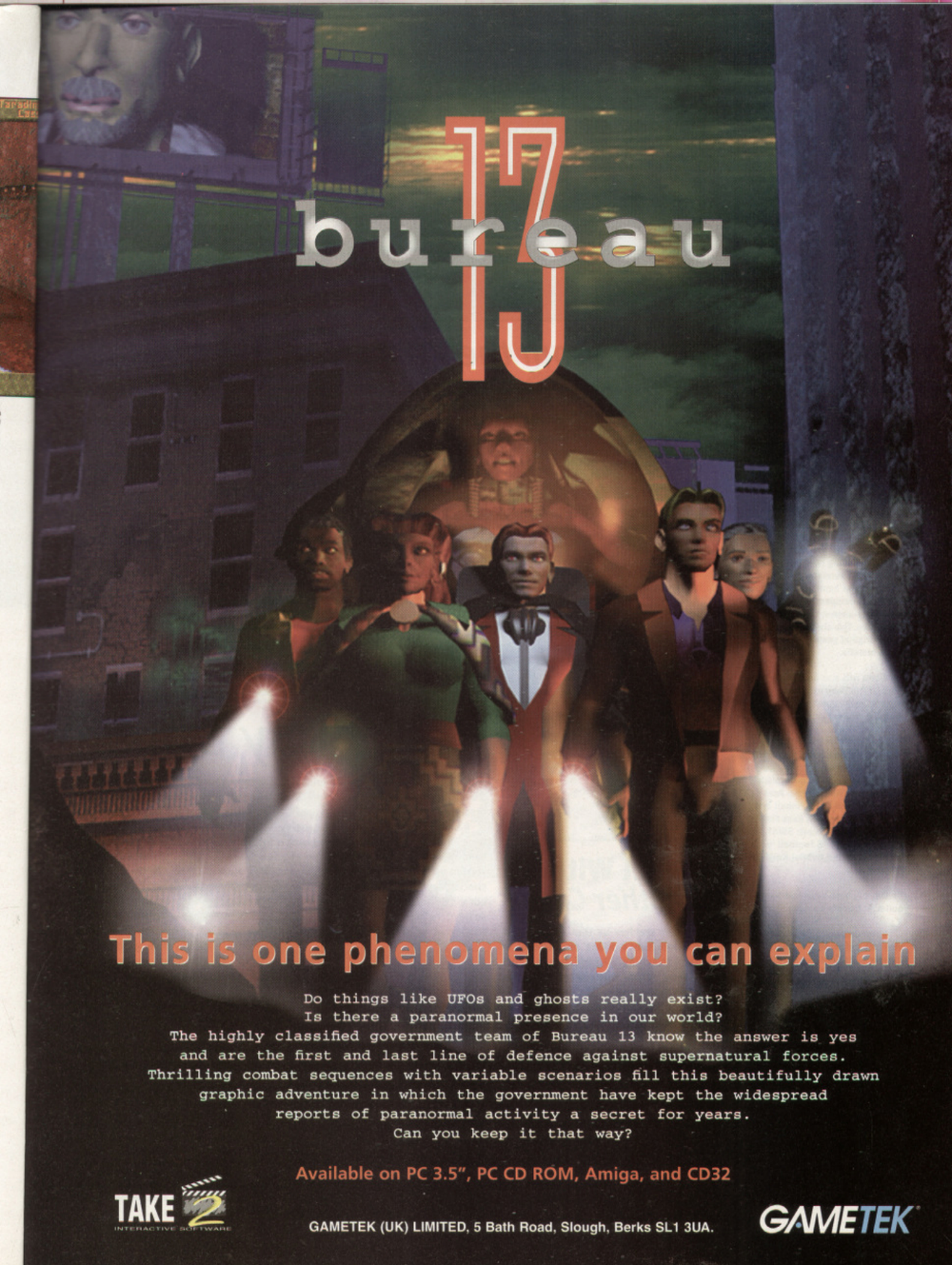
The computer entertainment industry has always been keen on force-feeding its punters new and more expensive technology. CD-based games were phased in before punters were ready for them, forcing them to upgrade their machines and spend more cash on their supposedly 'enhanced' software. No sooner has the Pentium become relatively affordable, than the P6 is unveiled. Sadly, you or I don't have much choice — it's a case of following the fashion or being left wearing flares.

Many bands now release multimedia albums that contain music tracks, videos and biographies. While in theory these sound fairly appetising — especially to die-hard fans — there's a danger that they could become the norm, replacing the more traditional albums that generations have listened to. Of course, this is a long way off, but if people rush out and buy these software packages and they sell well enough numbers, then why should the record companies bother with £9.99 CDs when, by digitising a few images and writing a few words of text, they can charge 30 quid more?

There's also been a huge increase in the number of CD-based movies you can buy. But films on CD aren't new — back in the mid-80s Laserdisc machines were heralded as the next big thing, but even a huge marketing spend couldn't convince the public to shell out for them.

The whole concept behind these 'black boxes' is fatally flawed. By integrating a computer, video and hi-fi you end up compromising on both quality and choice. After all, if your family owns one black box, what are you going to play games on when the rest of the family is glued to Coronation Street? And what if the CD drive breaks? You'll have to get the whole unit fixed — very costly and very inconvenient.

Why don't the big multimedia companies stop trying to phase this in now — it will never take off. Each month sees the entry of more and more big name rock stars into the PC arena (the latest is Peter Gabriel, with his unconvincing Explora 1 disc) and as curiosity persuades the public to try out these titles, so the sales increase. It's a vicious circle. Let's break it now before it's all too late...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INFO BULLETS

Depressed? Suicidal? Then why not cheer yourself up with Media Design and Reuters Television's cheery new CD-ROM, Disasters? Drawing on the vast resources of the Reuters film, still and news libraries, it'll allow you to play hysterical world events such as the eruption of Mount St Helens and the explosion at Union Carbide's Petiscide Plant over and over again!

Toys 'R' Us is to increase its stock of PC CD-ROM and floppy titles over the coming few months, and promises to continue to discount all its titles heavily. In the past, bargain-hungry console owners have been able to snap up new releases at unbelievable prices, and the same should apply to PC fans.

Sierra's scary-looking Phantasmagoria has been put back until July. The firm blames the heavy workload of Victoria Morsell, the game's main star, for the delay.

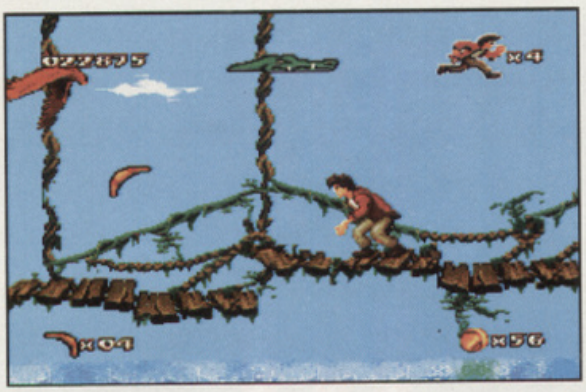
Staying with Sierra for just a moment longer, an Earthsiege expansion disk will be available from next month. Featuring new enemy Hercs, upgradeable versions of existing weapons, and approximately 20 new missions interspersed with loads of previously-unseen cinematic sequences, this should extend the life of the original game for at least a couple of months.

Sierra will also be releasing an Aces Of The Deep expansion disk with quite literally more things than in it than the original game.

...And while on the subject of Sierra, here are just a few of the games you can expect from the Reading-based software publisher over the next few months: Aces Of The Deep SVGA (July), 3D Pinball and Lost In Town (September), Bass Fishing (October), Police Quest: SWAT, Aces Of The Deep II, FPS Football '96, Earthsiege II and Gabriel Knight II (November).

Oh, and here's one last Sierra info bullet — there is no more Sierra news.

Virgin has just announced a service that will prove invaluable to crap gamers — its very own set of telephone helplines. A total of four have been set up and each deals with a specific range of Virgin's publishing portfolio. Dialling (0891) 333526 will get you through to a line dedicated to dealing with classic Virgin arcade games, such as Aladdin and The Lion King; (0891) 333527 is solely devoted to Westwood Studio releases like Kyrandia 3 and Lands Of Lore; calling (0891) 333528 will put you through to a hints line dedicated to Virgin's adventure games like Beneath A Steel Sky and Lost Eden, while (0891) 333529 reveals the secrets behind all of Virgin's LucasArts releases, like X-Wing and Dark Forces. Please check with the person who pays the phone bill before making your call...



Blast *From the Past*

Reminiscing ain't what it used to be. Fans of crumbly old 8-bit games are often shocked when presented with the original title years later (as Activision's dodgy Atari 2600 Action Pack has proved), so it's nice to see a classic being dusted down and polished up for a re-run over ten years later. And strike us down with a brick-covered baseball bat if it isn't Activision's Pitfall (one of the games included in its recent collection) being given the old PC treatment.

Originally released on the SNES and Mega Drive consoles just before Christmas, Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure brings Pitfall into the '90s with fantastic graphics (the animation just has to be seen to be believed) and tons of puzzles to solve and jungle-based levels to explore. Playing the role of Harry Jr, you have to search for your lost father (the star of the original Atari VCS game) who's disappeared in highly-mysterious circumstances.

An FMV intro sequence and specially-recorded rainforest sounds debut in the CD-ROM version, but whether or not Activision will hide the entire original game in there as it did in the console version remains to be seen, as that would somewhat negate the point of its 2600 collection, of which Pitfall is one of the only decent things worth playing. Look out for The Mayan Adventure this Autumn.

Watch The *Birdie*

This month's award for 'Best Title For A PC Golf Game' goes to GameTek for its forthcoming Fairway To Heaven, a golf game that sounds well above par (geddit?).

Rather than giving you just one complete golf course, the designers and programmers behind this mouthwatering CD-ROM release have nominated the best 18 holes in the world and rolled them into a single imaginary course. Top professional golfers including Jack Nicklaus, Pete Dye and Ben Crenshaw (who?) share their fond memories of the individual holes, and each comes complete with high-quality video clips harnessing the power only CDs can provide.

Arcade-style gameplay is the order of the day here, so you need not be a pro to get the best from this simulation. Seven different camera angles can be selected to give the best view of the current hole, and GameTek promises that there will be no tortuously long loading times between holes, something that has plagued PC golf sims in the past.

We'll be pulling on our plus-fours and hanging out with Bruce and Tarby over the next couple of months to prepare ourselves for a rigorous and ruthless appraisal in the near future.

Rebel With *Another Cause*

News reaches us that LucasArts is definitely working on a sequel to its best-selling CD-ROM smash Rebel Assault, which was always inevitable given the success of the original.

The game is likely to follow in the footsteps of the first, with gorgeous shoot-'em-up sections taken from the film trilogy forming the bulk of the action. True to form, LucasArts is being very hush-hush about its latest Star Wars-inspired release, but by spiking its drinks down the pub one night, we managed to get the American developer to admit that work has already started. No release date has been give yet, but we reckon Rebel Assault 2 will be in the shops for Christmas. Look out for more concrete news (i.e. with some actual facts) soon.

Better Buy British

Mirage will be asking the Americans and Japanese for a coin-op fight this Spring with the launch of the first all-British arcade machine, based around its successful (if a tad unplayable — on the PC at least) beat-'em-up, Rise Of The Robots.

Rise Of The Robots, the coin-op, harnesses the power of the PC. Its video engine is based on a 486 PC processor, giving it the best possible visuals.The game has been revamped for the competitive arcade market, improving on the original PC version no end. There are 13 additional robots, each of which has twice as many special moves as the computer version. But best of all, Mirage has taken some of our criticisms to heart by enabling players to leap over each other, putting right some of the major problems with the original. This fruity cake is topped with a tasty coating of extra speed and a vastly-increased number of inter-level cinematic sequences, hopefully making it one of the most palatable beat-'em-ups on offer to hungry arcade fighting fans.

While these improvements may anger PC owners who felt cheated by the final game, Mirage's experience should enable it to make its next Rise game — be it a direct sequel or a conversion of the coin-op — miles better than the original.

● **STOP PRESS!** In a fit of totally characteristic generousity, the good people at Mirage have offered us five copies of the Rise Of The Robots novel to give away in the small (but perfectly formed) compo! All you have to do is write down the name of the robot you play in Rise Of The Robots on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope, and then send it into us at the usual PC GAMES address marked 'Rise Compo'. The first five correct entries drawn out of the hat on the closing date of May 4th will each win a book. All the normal PC GAMES compo rules apply.

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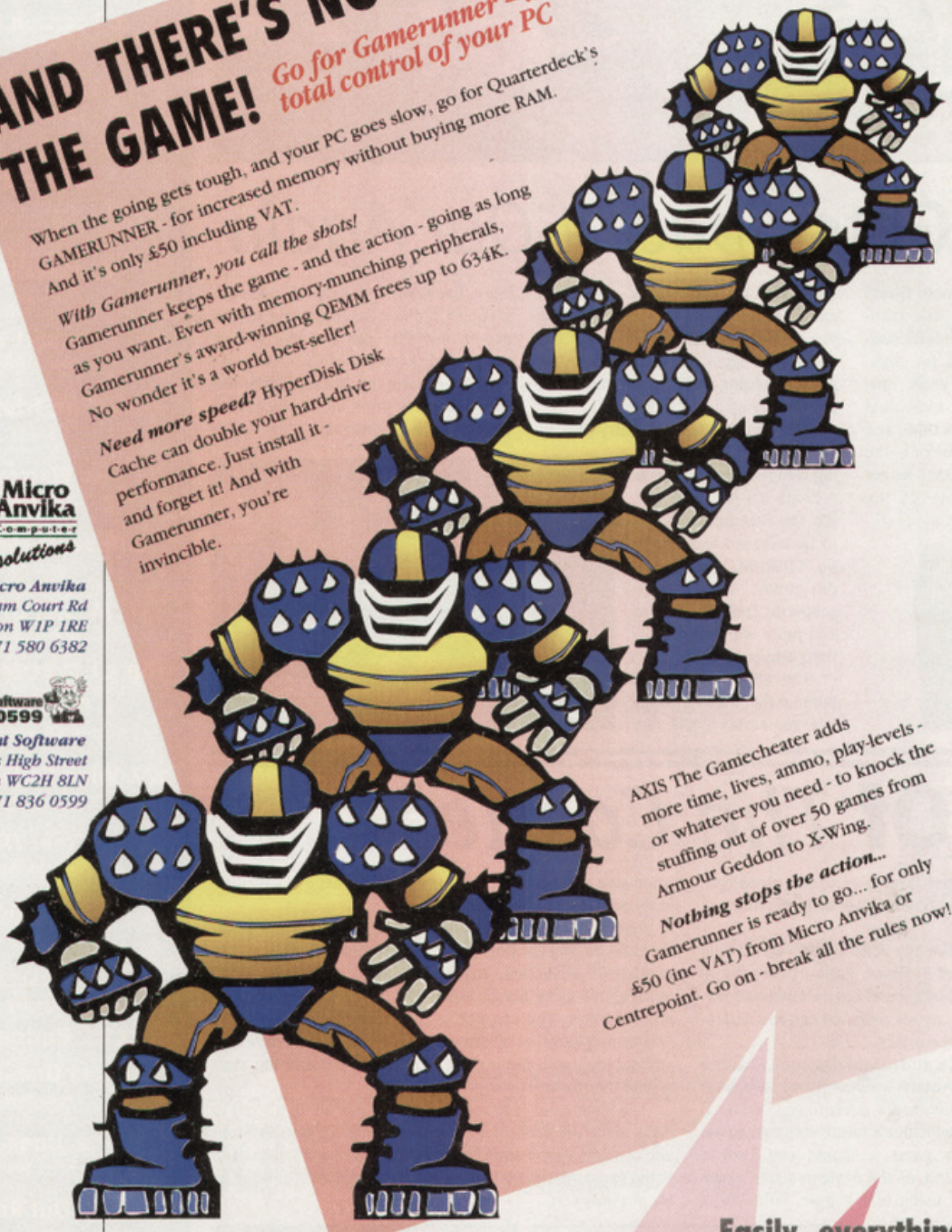

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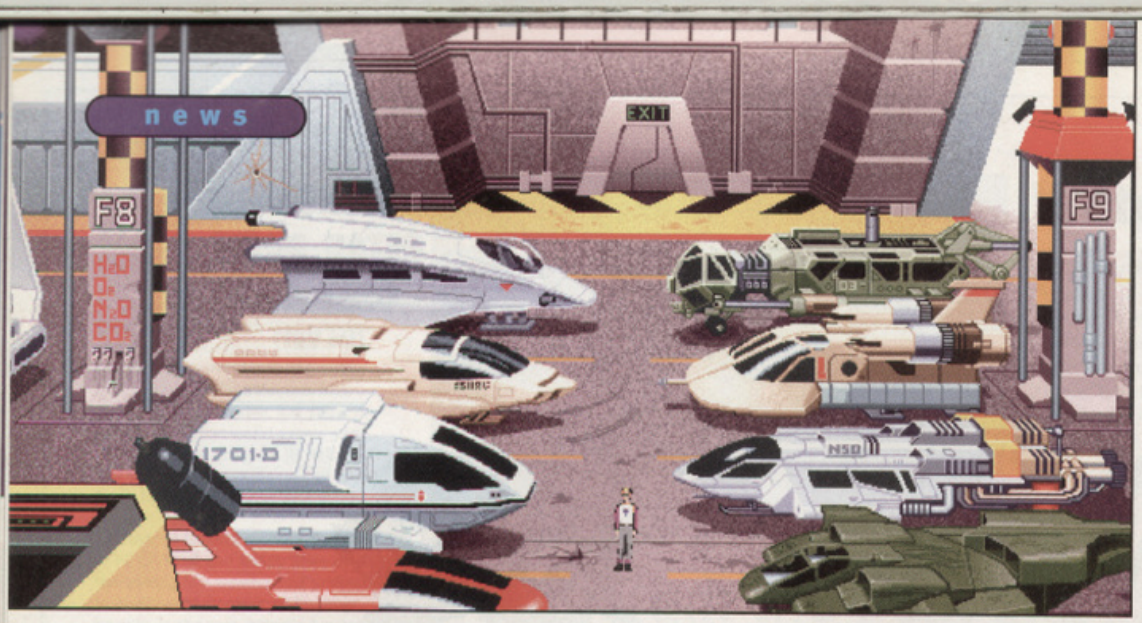
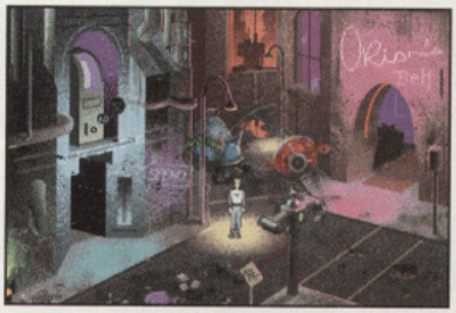


Sierra Gets *Spaced-Out Again*

The Space Quest series has managed to entertain adventurers for nigh-on nine years now with its individual mix of action and comedy, making the series' star Roger Wilco one of the most popular and prolific adventure game heroes on the PC. And just when you thought it was safe to step into space once again, along comes another galaxy-hopping quest to get your tired puzzle-solving juices flowing.

Yes, Space Quest 6: Carry On Up The Asteroid Belt is nearing completion, and Sierra reckons it's the best yet. It's the first Space Quest to be released exclusively on CD-ROM, giving the designers much more scope for creating weirder and more wonderful locations and puzzles.

The zany much-loved humour that made the first five games such hits has been tweaked and refined, and the graphics promise to make use of the power only CDs can provide. A new point-'n'-click interface has been implemented, making this the easiest of the series to get to grips with. Look out for the review in a month or so.



King Of *The Castle*

With 11th Hour literally one issue away from review (yes — really!), Trilobyte has been laying the foundations of its next two releases.

First up will be the provisionally-titled Castles, an CD-only adventure set in the heart of Scotland. Rather than using a mix of real film footage superimposed over numerous fully-rendered 3D backgrounds, Castles relies on cartoon animations to portray the bulk of the action.

At the time of writing, the storyboard has been finalised and the dialogue recorded — and from what we've seen, both are far superior to most multimedia adventures. Certainly, the story itself — more of which in a future issue when we take an in-depth look at the game — should lend itself to some hysterical set-pieces and, as the designers aren't confined to the restrictions of using real people, Trilobyte is promising outrageous moments a-plenty. Castle is pencilled in for an Autumn release.

Also bolting from the Trilobyte stable around the same time will be Dog Eat Dog (again, a provisional title), which is another CD adventure. Written by three professional script writers, this game places you in the back-stabbing world of office politics. You can opt to play a rather nerdy-looking American geezer or a stunning (and we mean stunning) young lady , with the idea being to lie, cheat and flirt your way to the top.

The filming has just been completed, so 'all' that's left to do is piece the action together — an unenviable task when you consider how many different plots and characters feature in the game. Again, we'll bring you more news just as soon as we possibly can.

CHARTS

Top 10 PC Games

1. **Premier Manager 3**
   Gremlin Interactive
2. **The Lion King**
   VIE
3. **Defender Of The Empire**
   VIE
4. **Aladdin**
   VIE
5. **Championship Manager Italia**
   Domark
6. **Transport Tycoon**
   MicroProse
7. **X-Wing Triple Pack**
   US Gold
8. **Warcraft**
   Interplay
9. **Rise Of The Triad**
   US Gold
10. **Master Of Magic**
    MicroProse

Top 5 CD-ROM Games

1. **Dark Forces**
   Virgin Interactive
2. **X-Wing Collector'sCD**
   Virgin Interactive
3. **Star Trek: TNG Demo**
   MicroProse
4. **Alone In The Dark 3**
   Infogrames
5. **Descent**
   Interplay

Top 5 PC Budget Games

1. **Formula One Grand Prix**
   PowerPlus
2. **Dune 2**
   The Hit Squad
3. **Out Run**
   Kixx
4. **Stunt Car Racer**
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5. **Descent (Shareware)**
   Interplay

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It's as easy as sticking your face over an Alien egg. Just read the three questions below, answer them as best you can, and then, with your flame-thrower in one hand and a pen in the other, write down your answers on the back of a postcard or a sealed envelope. For example, if you think that the answer to Question 1 is 'Polo', then write 1 (a) on your entry.

When you've answered all three questions, send your entry to us at: Aliens Compo, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

All entries must reach us by the 4th of May 1995, when the winner will be drawn from last month's take-away pizza box which is still lying under Dave Kelsall's desk.

The Questions

1. The name of the starship in Alien was:
   (a) Polo.
   (b) Rolo
   (c) Nostromo.
2. What did Frost say after the Aliens attacked the Marines underneath the Terraforming tower in Aliens:
   (a) Arrggghhhh!!!
   (b) Arrggghhhh!!!
   (c) Arrggghhhh!!!
3. In Alien3, Ripley crash lands on:
   (a) A prison planet.
   (b) Basildon.
   (c) Tatooine.

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feature

Look Out!

The whole face of the computer entertainment industry is changing. Over the last few months, *'Interactive'* divisions of powerful international media companies have sprung up from out of nowhere, and have hungrily started to devour their smaller but longer-established brethren. *But is this a good or a bad thing?* And what effect will it have on the games we play in the future? We investigate...

Once upon a time there was a small saltwater pond by the coast. Protected from the cruel ravages of the sea by a narrow sandbank, the pond was home to dozens of tiny fish. And these fish were beautiful. Each was coated in semi-fluorescent scales that broke the bright sunlight into a thousand shimmering colours, and people would travel for miles just to look at them as they played and frollicked in their pond home.

But the endlessly-lapping waves gradually eroded and broke down the sandbank, until eventually the pond became a part of the sea. And the tiny fish, knowing no better, swam out into the sea, eager to explore this excitingly vast new world. But there were sharks in the sea and they ate the tiny fishes, until there were no beautiful tiny fishes anymore...

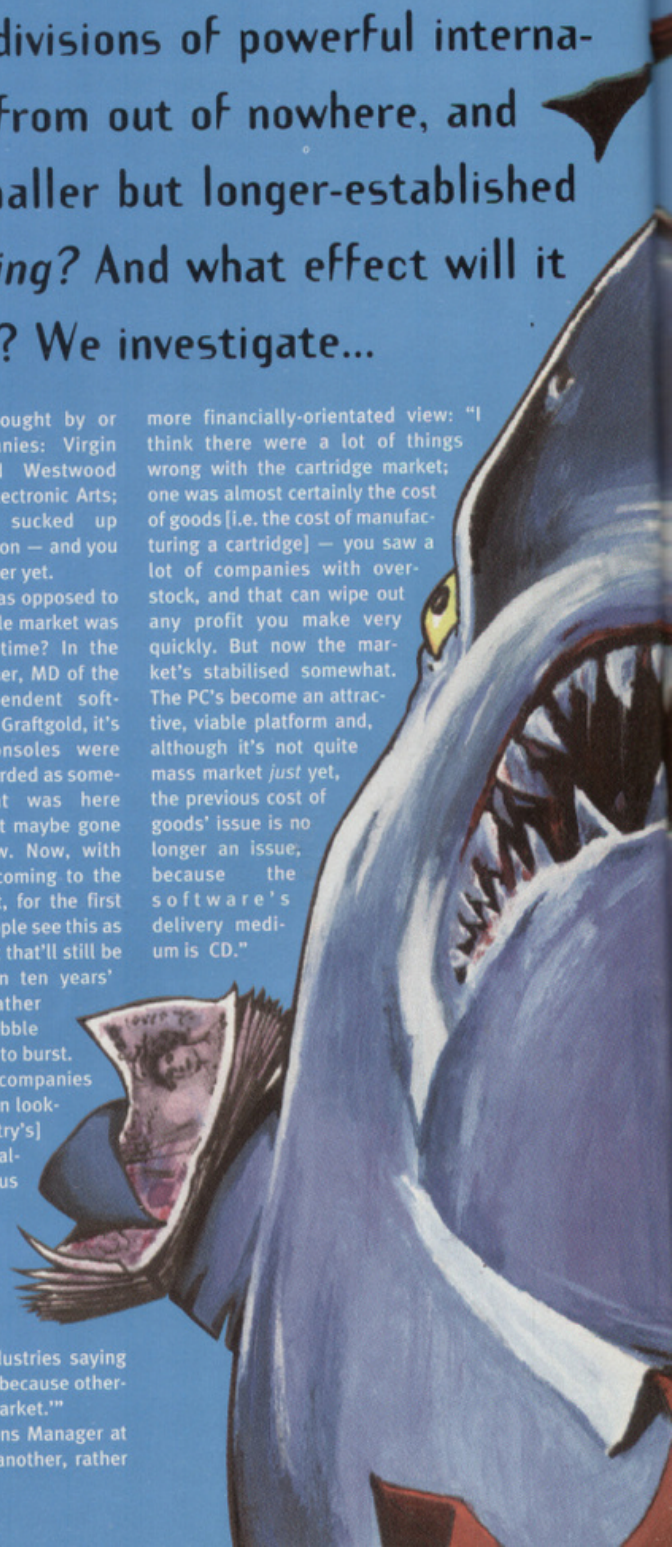
One of the most exciting things about the computer games industry is the rate at which it evolves and changes, with announcements of new machines and new companies seemingly every month. But even by the industry's own standards the last year or so has been pretty hectic.

Many major international media companies like Viacom, BMG, Time Warner and MCA/Universal have announced that they are forming their own 'interactive entertainment' divisions, and there's been a rapid increase in smaller developers and publishers being bought by or merged with much bigger companies: Virgin Interactive Entertainment acquired Westwood Studios; Bullfrog joined forces with Electronic Arts; Warner Interactive Entertainment sucked up Renegade and Accolade... the list goes on — and you can bet that the feeding frenzy's not over yet.

But why is all this happening *now*, as opposed to a couple of years ago when the console market was going through its boom-time? In the opinion of Steve Turner, MD of the successful independent software developer Graftgold, it's because "consoles were always regarded as something that was here today, but maybe gone tomorrow. Now, with the PC coming to the forefront, for the first time people see this as a market that'll still be around in ten years' time, rather than a bubble that's about to burst.

"The big companies have always been looking [the game industry's] way, but now they're finally starting to see tremendous growth and computer entertainment outstripping the other entertainment markets. In America it's already outstripped the music industry and it's predicted to outstrip the video industry, so now you suddenly get those two industries saying 'Right, let's move in on this new area, because otherwise we're going to be in a minority market.'"

Andrew Wright, the Communications Manager at BMG Interactive Entertainment, has another, rather more financially-orientated view: "I think there were a lot of things wrong with the cartridge market; one was almost certainly the cost of goods [i.e. the cost of manufacturing a cartridge] — you saw a lot of companies with overstock, and that can wipe out any profit you make very quickly. But now the market's stabilised somewhat. The PC's become an attractive, viable platform and, although it's not quite mass market *just* yet, the previous cost of goods' issue is no longer an issue, because the software's delivery medium is CD."



SHARK!?!

The fact of the matter is that the computer entertainment market is no longer the cosy little cottage industry it used to be. It's making big money — and when there's big money to be made, big businesses get *very* interested. And for a company like MCA/Universal, which owns the licensing rights to dozens of hit movies, it makes sound financial sense to exploit these properties in-house rather than put them in the hands of a third party. The same principle holds true for many of the other 'new players'...

"There's what's called 'media convergence'," points out Andrew Wright. "From BMG's point-of-view, most of our intellectual copyright is music. Along the line you're going to see interactive music — or what's now being called CD Plus — and there will be a time when music and interactivity converge. Naturally, BMG want to be there when it does."

The benefits to the software developer of being bought by a big company are many. Obviously the main one is cash, but there are other, equally important advantages. Most of these companies have offices in several countries around the world, each with large marketing departments skilled in bringing new products to the public's attention. Then there's security — somebody like Viacom, one of the world's largest media companies, is not going to go belly-up overnight.

But many people have expressed concern about software developers, those 'beautiful tiny fishes', getting eaten up by what they perceive as 'sharks'. They fear that as the money men enter the industry, it'll spell the death of originality and creativity, and that all we'll be able to look forward to are endless clones of the current hit games.

It's not a fear that's shared by Steve Turner...

"It's a valid concern," he agrees, "but when you look at the companies who I think are most likely to succeed, they are all entertainment concerns which are used to make money out of creative people. Take the record companies; they know they can't tell a singer or a group how to write a song or whatever, so they let them get on with that part and simply give them the facilities to be able to do it. And that's what will happen in the game industry."

"What it means for people like us is that instead of trying to buy new kit and new machines out of profits from the last game we've done, which is a bit reactive — we always have to wait for a big hit before we can make an investment — we can now get ahead of the game, predict the new machines that are coming along and start writing for the new wave of technology. This is very exciting for us because we can be at the forefront again, whereas developers tend to be the last ones in the chain to get any money — we have to wait for a product to hit, then wait for the royalties to come in from the publisher."

Andrew Wright agrees: "People shouldn't be worried — we're not going to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. The minute you start interfering with teams and their creativity is the minute you start destroying the very reason you bought them. But what it *does* do is enable teams who have been building a company to reap the rewards and finance the operation, so that they can start work on the next generation of computer entertainment. Gone are the days when it was just a one-man operation in the back bedroom — now you have to spend serious money to develop a game."

It seems, then, that the emergence of these massive 'super software houses' won't mean fewer but *more* great games. Software developers, freed from cash worries, will be able to spend their time creating bigger, better and even more spectacular games. Perhaps getting eaten by a shark is not such a bad thing after all...

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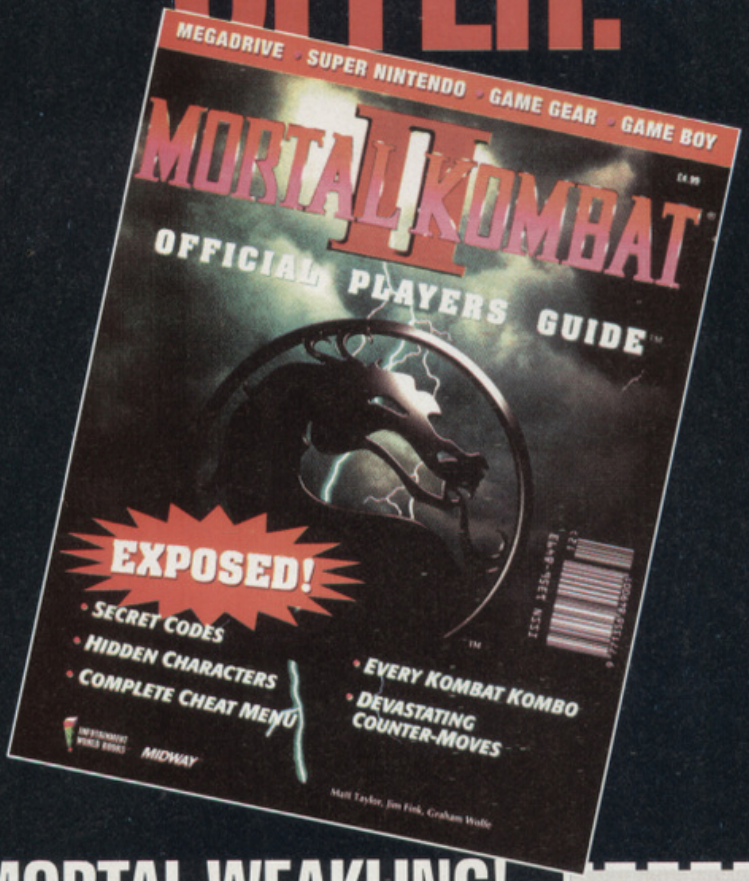

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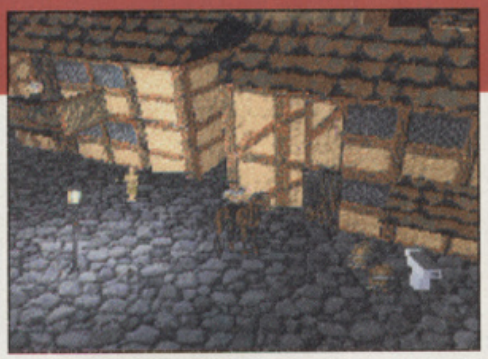
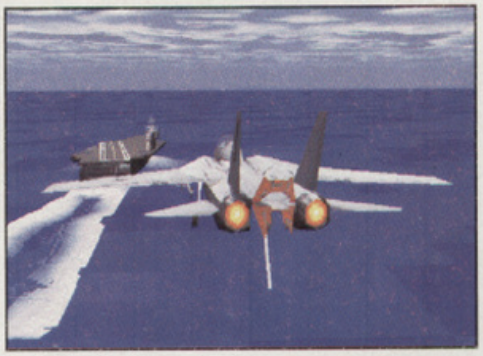
previews

Could 1995 go down in computer entertainment history as the best year for PC games ever? Well, if this little lot are anything to go, the answer has to be 'Maybe'...





Aliens.....26

French developers Cryo think that you'll wet yourself when you play their stunning new adventure, which stars the galaxy's scariest xenomorphs — the face-huggin', acid-bleedin', chest-burstin' Aliens. Well, Alex Simmons did, anyway...

Gremlin: Expect The Unexpected.....30

Gremlin obviously doesn't believe in doing things by halves. The Sheffield-based softco has not one, not two, not three, but FOUR top new titles in development, all of which have chart-topping potential. David Upchurch is agog...

Millennium: Moving With The Times.....34

Like many UK software publishers, Millennium hasn't found it easy shedding its Amiga-orientated past. But its new crop of games look set to establish it as a PC developer *par excellence*. David Upchurch brings back this on-the-spot report.

Top Gun.....38

You've seen the film — now play the game! Yes, Spectrum Holobyte intends to bring all the high-flying thrills and sexy spills of the hit Tom Cruise movie to your PC with its forthcoming flight sim. Dean Evans has his breath taken away...

The Elder Scrolls: DaggerFall.....40

Bethesda's role-playing extravaganza The Elder Scrolls: Arena went down a storm with D&Ders everywhere when it was released in the Spring of last year — and this massively-enhanced sequel looks set to do the same. Alex Simmons is the man swigging mead.

Apache Longbow.....42

Digital Integration is all set to go on the warpath (geddit?) with its latest flight sim. Featuring some gorgeous SVGA graphics and bundles of playability, it promises to do for choppers what Tornado did for jets. Dean Evans takes it for a spin.

-BISLEY 95-

Aliens

In the first instalment of a special three-part preview, Alex Simmons rode the express elevator to Hell and found Giger's Alien rearing its ugly head in darkest Paris...

It is indeed a rare and delightful thing when a computer game conversion of a movie has the same cinematic qualities as its silver-screen counterpart. And Aliens, the forthcoming game from talented French developers Cryo, promises to be as atmospheric, thrilling and as tense as the nightmarish film trilogy that first started life over fifteen years ago.

But even though Aliens has many characteristics of a motion picture, it may come as a surprise to learn that the game is actually based on the gritty licensed comic books by Dark Horse. Intrestingly, Dark Horse France, the French arm of this highly-successful US company (which has been responsible for the comic serialisation of, amongst others, The Mask), has recently been consumed by French programming giants Cryo, who acquired the rights to Aliens way back in 1994.

The game itself is the brainchild of Cryo managing director, Jean Martial LeFranc, and game design guru, Nicholas Choukroun. As huge fans of the both the films and the comic books, the pair dreamed up the concept for an Aliens game and threw together a few ideas before sketching out a rough storyline for the game. "The original storyboard was created about a year ago" explains Choukroun, sat behind a desk cluttered with concept sketches and loads of little nicknacks, including a toy Tail Attack Alien Queen™. "The storyboard was drawn by graphic artist Bernard Bittler, and from this Jean Martial and I created a basic demo of the game."

It was this demo that was shown to Dark Horse, who promptly agreed to give Cryo free reign over their comics and allowed them to create a unique game that totally captured the tense atmosphere of Aliens. It was after the license was finally acquired that work on Aliens began properly, when Choukroun and Bittler joined forces to construct more comprehensive storyboards, including sketches of virtually every single scene in the game.

Bittler, the chief designer on the Aliens project, visualised Choukroun's ideas, many of which were taken from the comics themselves, as he reveals: "Originally the game design was based on the comic series, Aliens: Labyrinth, which we found the most

GAME	ALIENS
PUBLISHER	MINDSCAPE
DEVELOPER	CRYO
WORK *STARTED*	FEBRUARY 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	AUTUMN 1995

The Nightmare Begins...

Although the story of Aliens has been created from scratch by game designer Nicholas Choukroun, it is loosely based on the Dark Horse comic book series, Aliens: Labyrinth. It's the tale of a genetic scientist experimenting by inter-breeding humans and Aliens, who has also created an army of synthetic Aliens — powerful slaves that obey his every command.

The game opens in much the same way as the first Alien movie, with the starship USS Sheridan returning to Earth after a long haul through deep space. The crew, deep asleep inside their hibernation capsules, are blissfully unaware of the nightmare that is about to occur on the nearby planet of B54C.

On the planet's surface, deep inside a terra-formered base, the darkness stirs. With a hiss, the insect-like exoskeleton form of an Alien emerges from the stark silence, saliva dripping from its jaws as it senses movement nearby.

In one swift movement, the Alien darts across the barely-lit corridor and grabs the head of a colonist, its jaws stretched open as it pulls its victim closer. Loosing control of his bodily functions, the colonists is torn apart by the Alien's powerful limbs, the headless body slumping to the floor in a pool of scarlet blood.

Elsewhere on the planet, the colony is in utter chaos. Hordes of Aliens move silently through the base, effortlessly ripping through the hapless colonists as they try to fend them off. At the communications terminal, Colonel Crespi manages to activate the distress signal, but his elation is cut short as his body is torn to shreds, and his dismembered limbs are tossed across the room.

Back aboard the USS Sheridan, the computer displays an SOS message. Slowly the crew are awoken...

Aliens: The Early Years

Cryo's Aliens is not, of course, the first game to be based around the galaxy's favourite face-huggin', chest-burstin', acid-bleedin' xenomorphs; Alien, published by Mind Games and based on the original 1979 movie, earned that honour. Released on the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64, it was a simple-looking but surprisingly addictive strategy/resource management game, which placed you in control of the Nostromo's crew as they attempted to hunt down the hostile xenomorphic intruder.

The release of director Jim Cameron's more gung-ho sequel Aliens in 1986 prompted the appearance of not one but two computer game tie-ins. The first, published by Electric Dreams on the ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC, was an excellent strategic shoot-'em-up, which bore many similarities to EA's recent PC game, Space Hulk.

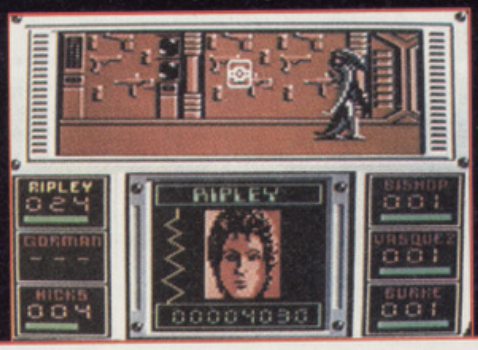
In it you played the leader of a group of six Marines on a mission to locate and kill the Queen hidden deep inside the Alien-infested colony on LV-426. Each Marine was controlled by issuing movement orders, and you could watch their progress via their helmet-mounted cameras. Whenever a threat — such as an Alien, a Face-Hugger, an egg or the like — was in a Marine's vicinity, you were then able to leap in and blast it. Great fun.

The second Aliens game, released only on the Commodore 64, was produced by Activision in the United States and, frankly, it was a bit of a dog. A series of six incredibly simple mini-arcade games, it may have had variety but it certainly didn't have playability or depth, and it was nearly impossible to enjoy if you didn't have a disk drive.

Coming slightly up to date there was the Alien 3 game which appeared on all major computer and console formats. Programmed by Probe Software (who also created the excellent Mortal Kombat 2 conversion reviewed this issue), it was essentially a platform-based shoot-'em-up which bore precious little resemblance to the film it was supposedly based on, bar the fact that the sprites had shaved heads.

Last but not least we come to Aliens Versus Predator. Another game based on a Dark Horse comic, AVP was created solely for Atari's Jaguar console and took the form of a Doom-like 3D shoot-'em-up in which you could play either an Alien, a Predator or a Marine. Sadly, however, it's not half as exciting or as interesting as it sounds...

And what of the future? Well, apart from Cryo's game, there's also Alien Trilogy from Acclaim which is due for release later this year. Another Doom-style game, it reputedly features some of the most incredible animation ever seen. More news on this one soon...



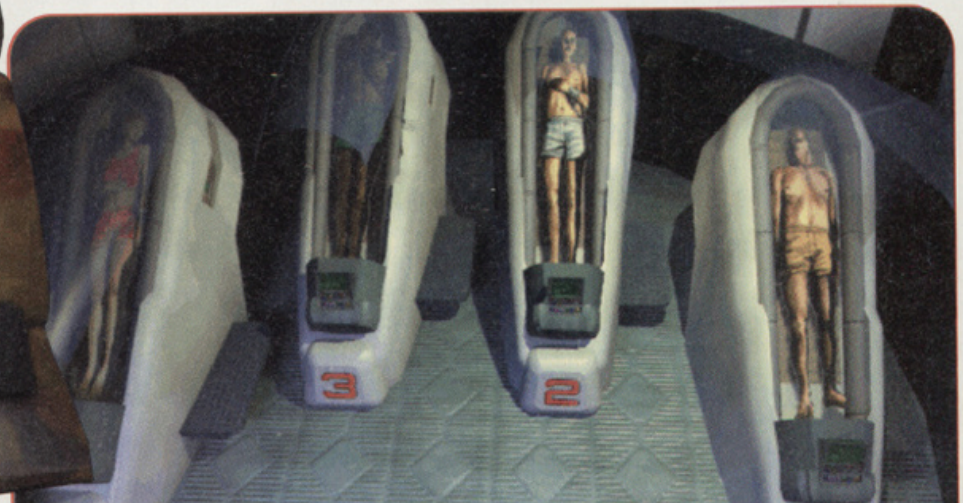
interesting series of them all. During development, though, we changed the storyline considerably, constantly adding ideas — especially to the grand finale at the end!"

So even though the game is based on the comics, it doesn't actually adhere to any one book? "Exactly," Choukroun confirms. "We've added loads of ideas of our own, so there are bits in the game that haven't appeared in any of the films or the comics." For example? "Ah, that would be telling! What I will say is that I've taken a lot of ideas from all the Aliens comics, including weapons and objects such as the Alien protector [which shields the holder by 'jamming' the Aliens' telepathic communications]. Also the idea for the chemicals [which form various vaccines and viruses when combined together] were taken from the comics."

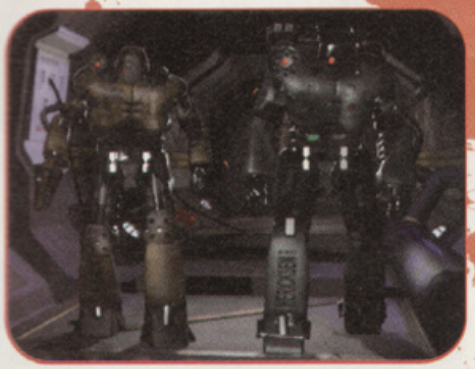
The game also stars a mad (or revolutionary, depending on how you look at it) scientist experimenting to interbreed Aliens and humans. This all happens on the distant shake-'n'-bake colony of B54C, a planet over-run by Alien activity and the current destination of the USS Sheridan, whose crew are answering a desperate distress signal beamed from the planet (see 'The Nightmare Begins...' panel for more on the plot).

Now you'd be forgiven for thinking The Company would send a squad of Marines on a bug-hunt to wipe out the Aliens, but instead it's a group of four terraformers who are the unfortunate quartet unlucky enough to receive the colony's SOS transmission. The crew is a motley bunch, as Choukroun explains: "The team is lead by Williams, the ship's technician. Then there's Henrickson, an ex-space marine who was booted out of the Corps for leaving a fellow soldier to die at the hands of an Alien, Sinclair, an unfriendly scientist who's fascinated by Aliens, and Lola McGuiness, the ship's medic."

Although Williams is the commander, most of the game is spent moving Henrickson around the Sheridan and through the Alien-infested colony. He can freely explore the complex, and may interact with



(Above) Whatever you do, DON'T open the door!
(Below) The crew of the USS Sheridan climb into their exoskeleton's and prepare to go to work on those Alien fraggers.



any objects or characters found along the way. The crew spend most of their time inside their individual exoskeletons (which protect them from Alien attacks and are also a lot easier to render in 3D Studio!), and these allow each team member to perform individual character-specific functions.

Henricksen's exoskeleton is a combat model and is therefore equipped with flame-throwers, grenades... the lot. Lola's medic exos has various serums stored in backpack to help her perform on-the-spot surgery, while William's mech has a massive pair of hydraulic pincers which allow him to lift heavy objects. The science exoskeleton belongs to Sinclair, and is equipped with computer terminals and various connectors which allow him to jack into the colony's mainframe. Each of the crew's mechs is needed at some point during the game, so working as a team to solve the game's tricky puzzles is essential.

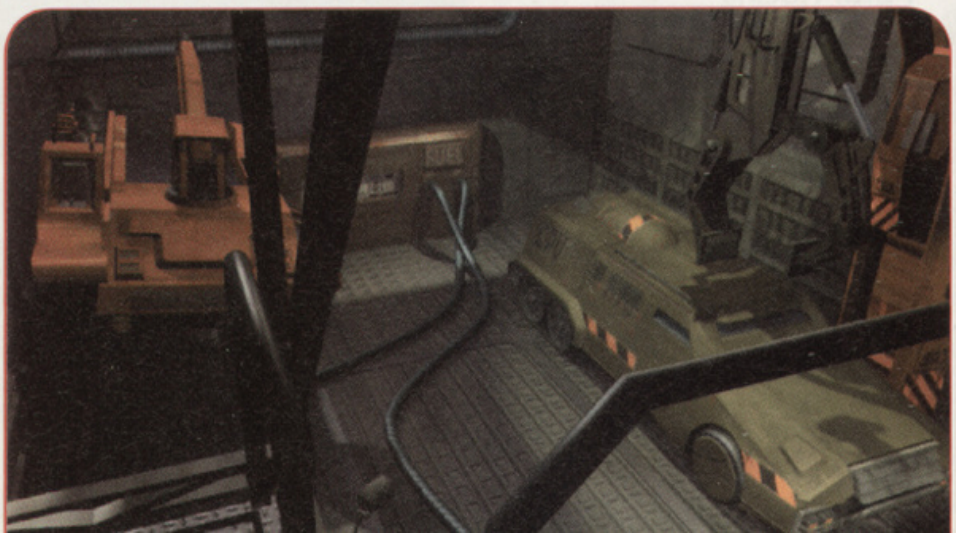
Back to the game itself, right from the start Cryo wanted to make the game simple to play, but Nicholas Choukroun was adamant he didn't want to produce a shoot-'em-up like so many of the previous Aliens conversions. Instead they opted for a in-depth graphic adventure, similar in style to Lost Eden but greatly enhanced in terms of interaction. One thing Cryo did not want is for the game to be linear, and so gamers have the freedom to go just about anywhere they want and to solve the puzzles in virtually any order (to some extent, anyway).

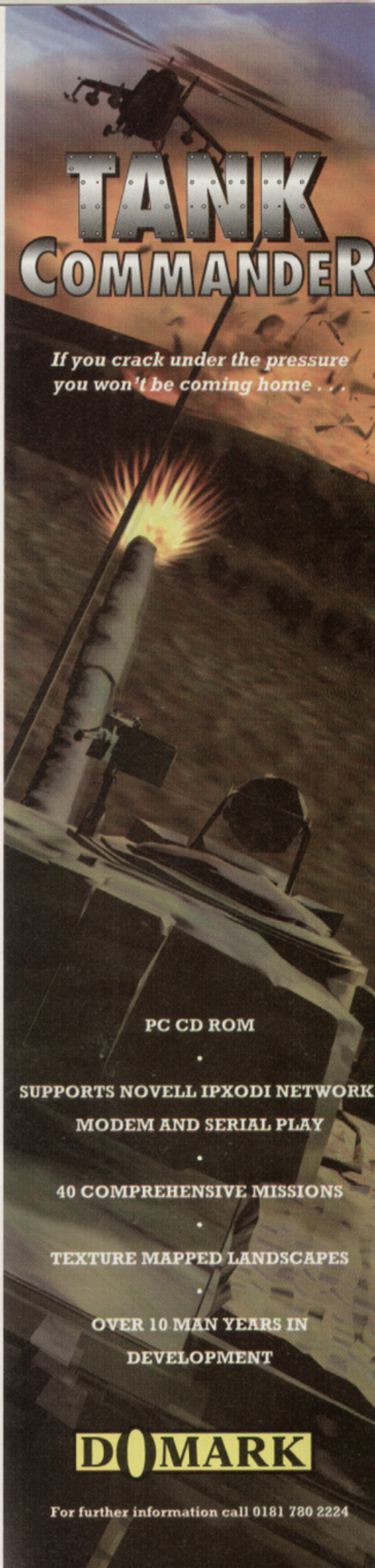
Another thing they had to bear in mind was that Aliens is a license and must therefore be seen as one. "Dark Horse obviously want to ensure traces of the comic book license are clearly visible [in the game]," Choukroun confirms, "but they didn't get that involved in the actual design of the product. Generally, if it's good, then they are happy. Dark Horse also know it's not possible to make a game like a comic — comics and games are so different. Dark Horse are therefore fairly lenient in the way the game is designed."

This freedom has allowed Cryo to be extremely creative when designing the various characters and even the assorted Alien cross-breeds encountered on B54C, even though every idea must also be given the go-ahead by 20th Century Fox, which released the original films and are the owners of the licence.

It seems that as long as the characters from the films are not used and the storyline isn't a direct rip-off, Cryo are relatively free to do whatever they want. And it seems like they have. Although much of Aliens is very much under-wraps at the moment, the few snippets on show look a lot more impressive and, dare I say it, cinematic than previous games from the Cryo/Mindscape stable.

Could it be Cryo have created the PC's first true interactive movie to feature a Hollywood-style plot and special effects more akin to the silver-screen than the humble PC? Well, I hate to say, but you'll just have to wait and see — but not that long. Tune in to next month's PC GAMES when we'll take a closer look at Cryo's masterpiece-in-the-making...





preview

Expect The

Someone get a doctor! David Upchurch has just returned from a secret mission to inspect Gremlin Interactive's new games for 1995 — and he's so impressed, he thinks his brain is going to explode!

I'm shocked. I'm stunned. My flabber, as they say, has been well and truly gasted. Why? Well, I've just got back from a visit to Gremlin Interactive to take a look at its forthcoming games for 1995 and beyond — and quite frankly, I think it's the strongest line-up of releases I've seen from any software company I've ever visited.

Yes, it's true. The company that once created simplistic arcade games like Zool and Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge has (after a slightly faltering step with Retribution) well and truly come of age. The four games I saw in development are all of A-list, smash-hit quality, with not a filler amongst them, and all push the PC to new technical heights. I'll make a prediction now: it's going to be a good year for Gremlin — and for all us PC gamesplayers...

(Above and below) A couple of early shots from Actua Soccer which illustrate the multitude of camera angles, the texture-mapped pitch and stadium, and the ellipsoid-polygon players.

Actua Soccer

The first of Gremlin's 'next generation' PC games is likely to be the superb-looking Actua Soccer (which, of all the games previewed here, is the only one with a proper title — all the rest have working titles, hence the 'quote' marks around them all). As you've probably already gathered, it's a football simulation — but one that's technically far superior to anything you've seen before.

If any comparisons are to be made at all, it's with FIFA Soccer on the 3DO console. Like Electronic Arts' game, Actua Soccer uses advanced 3D technology to create a truly breathtaking footballing experience. The entire pitch and stadium is generated from animated, texture-mapped polygons, which permit special effects like 'Mexican Waves' from the crowds of spectators, while the actual footballers are built up from ellipsoidal polygons, like the characters in Ecstatica. Because everything is 'true' 3D, you can pan around, up and down, as well as zoom in and out, to your heart's content, allowing you to view the action from any angle you wish.

However, where Actua Soccer really excels is in the animation of the players. This is Gremlin's first game to utilise its newly-bought motion capture technology (see the 'Worlds In Motion' panel for more on this), and you need only look at this game to see that it was money well spent. It's a weird experience watching the players running about, tackling and heading because it all looks *uncannily* realistic. Even watching the computer playing against itself is thrilling, because the action is as good as — if not better than — anything you'll see on Match Of The Day.

Thankfully it's very unlikely Actua Soccer will be all looks and no content. The programmers worked on the actual game engine before the graphics engine, using crude 2D representations of the pitch and players to make sure the gameplay was completely up to scratch before they even thought about adding the visual bells and whistles.

Believe me, Actua Soccer is going to be absolutely huge — look out for a more in-depth preview in the very near future.

● **Actua Soccer is due for release in June.**

'Fatal Racing'

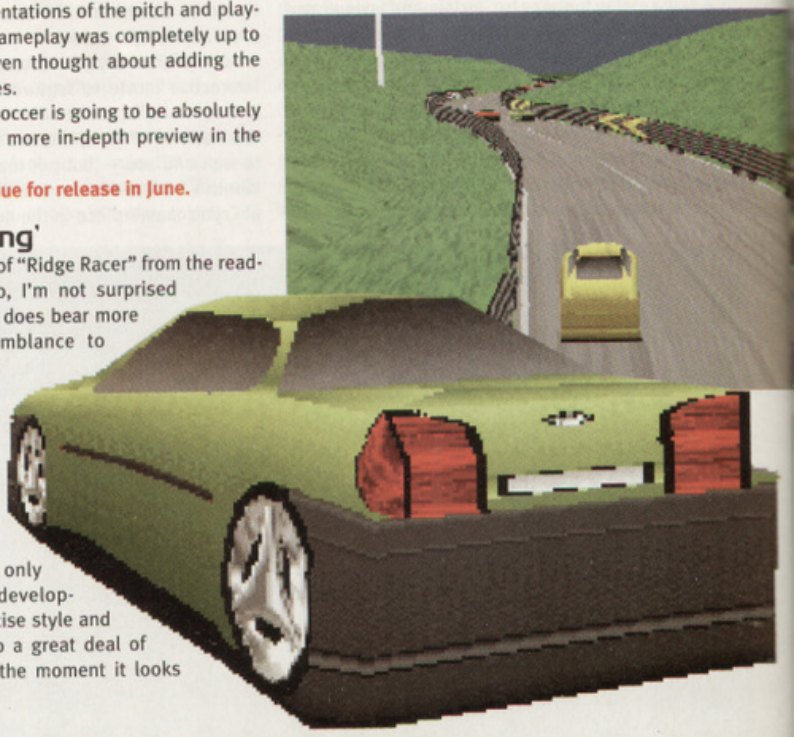
Do I hear murmurs of "Ridge Racer" from the readers at the back? If so, I'm not surprised because 'Fatal Racing' does bear more than a passing resemblance to Namco's brilliant arcade racing game. However, in terms of gameplay, it's got more in common with Geoff Crammond's ancient classic Stunt Car Racer if anything.

With the game only three months into development, the game's precise style and look is still subject to a great deal of change. However, at the moment it looks likely to be a fast-paced race in saloon cars over an assortment of tracks, each littered with aerial jumps, twisting corkscrews and other perilous road hazards.

The game engine uses texture-mapped polygons throughout to create an exciting, visually impressive driving environment — if you ask me, even at this early stage it already makes Papyrus Software's NASCAR Racing look very shoddy. Like Ridge Racer (and almost every other modern racing game), the game also boasts a wide variety of 'out-of-car' views to flick between, so those who prefer to drive from the safety and comfort of a chase camera can do so.

Sadly, these screenshots don't really convey how good the game actually is, mainly because they don't move — even with full detail on, the screen updates at a blistering rate of 30 frames per second in VGA mode on a 90MHz Pentium. Gremlin are also planning an SVGA mode, which promises to be absolutely stunning. Look out for more news soon.

● **'Fatal Racing' is due for release in the Autumn.**

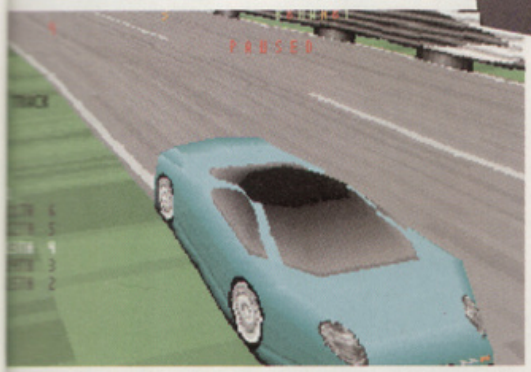


Any More For Any More?

Fans of football management games will doubtless be delighted to learn that Gremlin has yet another Premier Manager game in the pipeline. Called — oh yes! — Premier Manager 4, Gremlin promises that the new game will be the ultimate footy management sim (although I'm sure that they said that about Premier Manager 3 too). The coding will be handled by a new programming team, so it should look and play quite differently to its predecessors. But don't get too excited — this one's a *looong* way off yet...

e Unexpected

(Above and below) Here's 'Fatal Racing' in action — and doesn't it look smart? As long as it plays as good as it looks, we should be in for a treat. Gremlin reckons that it runs at 30fps on a Pentium, even at full detail.



(Below and bottom) Unlike Under A Killing Moon, which populated its 3D world with 2D bitmapped objects, everything in 'Neutropolis' is constructed from texture-mapped 3D polygons.

Shoot For Loot!

If you've been down to one of the bigger arcades recently, chances are you'll have seen a Virtuality machine. These Virtual Reality set-ups have been enormously popular in coin-op centres across the country, and soon you'll be able to experience a new adventure on them — Shoot For Loot.

Developed in-house by Gremlin for the Virtuality 2, an enhanced PC-based version of the original Amiga-based Virtuality machines, Shoot For Loot is a futuristic game show in which contestants have to seek out and kill each other while picking up any cash prizes they can find. It's a bit like the old Williams' coin-op Smash TV, but in glorious 3D.

The version I saw was very nearly finished — and great fun to play too, by the way — so it should be appearing in your local arcade in the very near future. Keep a look out for it.

'Neutropolis'

Gremlin plans to turn the graphic adventure genre on its head with 'Neutropolis', a game set in a dull, drab future where your aim is simply to brighten up everyone's day.

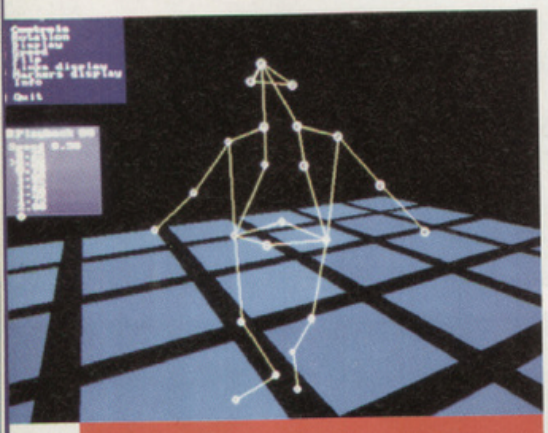
The twist is that unlike most adventures, in which the gameworld is depicted using 2D hand-painted art, Neutropolis's gameworld is generated completely from texture-mapped 3D polygons. And rather than having an on-screen alter-ego, you view everything from a first-person perspective and you have total freedom to move around, Doom-style, as if you are really there, although the game occasionally cuts to a dramatic third-person 'cutscene' when something of importance happens.

The closest thing to it is Access Software's Under A Killing Moon, but because everything in the game is rendered in proper 3D, the game objects don't distort strangely when you view them from an unusual angle. Also, the characters you meet will also be polygon-based and animated using Gremlin's motion capture technology, so theoretically the gameplay won't be so linear as Killing Moon's.

The 3D engine itself is the work of Tony Crowther, the legendary programmer who created hits like Potty Pigeon and Suicide Express on the Commodore 64 and Captive 2 on the Amiga, although the actual game itself is being created by Gremlin's team of in-house programmers.

It's early days yet — for example, the game's non-player characters have yet to be implemented — but if the gameplay matches the graphics, this should be brilliant. There will be more news on this as we get it.

● **'Neutropolis' is due for release in the Autumn.**



Worlds In Motion

If anything symbolises Gremlin's commitment to advanced interactive entertainment, it's the company's new in-house Motion Analysis System. Developed in America and costing a smidgeon under $250,000, the Motion Analysis System allows Gremlin's game designers to 'capture' the motion of an actor (or of any creature or object) and place it directly into their games, creating a level of animated realism that's nearly impossible to achieve by hand.

The Motion Analysis System's most unique feature is that it's optically-based. Gremlin's motion capture studio is lined with six special CRC video cameras, each fitted with light-emitting diodes (LEDs) emitting a beam of monochromatic light into the performing area. Small, light-reflecting spheres are placed at key points on the performer (such as at the elbow joints or on the feet) then, as the performer goes through his or her paces, these spheres reflect the LED beams directly back into the cameras, allowing them to record motion at up to 120 frames per second.

Of course, Gremlin isn't the first company to employ motion capture technology in its games — for example, Origin has used a rival system called 'Flock Of Birds' to create the wonderful animations for the characters in BioForge. However, the main advantage that the Motion Analysis System has over 'Flock Of Birds' and systems like it is that the performer being captured isn't encumbered by wires trailing from the sensors placed on his body, allowing a much greater freedom of movement.

Given the system's hefty price tag, Gremlin is unsurprisingly *very* keen to use the system in as many of its games as possible. It's also hiring out the studio to film and TV production companies to assist in the creation of special effects, at the cost of around £2000 a day!

'Realm Of The Haunting'

Using the same 3D game engine as 'Neutropolis', 'Realm Of The Haunting' is another graphic adventure. This promises to be in a somewhat darker vein than 'Neutropolis', as it's based loosely on the works of gothic horror writer H.P. Lovecraft. There's very little to see of it at the moment, but what's there is already highly impressive. We'll keep you posted about this one...

● **'Realm Of The Haunting' is due for release this Christmas.**

An early design sketch for one of the characters in 'Realm Of The Haunting'.

'K240'

Those readers who happen to be ex-Commodore Amiga owners may remember a cracking strategy game called K240. Set in an unexplored asteroid field, the player's aim was to build up a mining colony on one of the tumbling rocks and eventually to expand and colonise the rest of the asteroid field. The problems came when you encountered an alien race, who had the same intentions...

Well, the good news for all those with fond memories of K240 is that it will be coming to the PC — although probably not until Spring of next year at the very earliest. Retaining the basic gameplay that made the Amiga version such a hit, the game will be radically enhanced and tweaked for the PC, specifically by the use of rendered SVGA graphics throughout and the inclusion of a network mode so players can compete against each other. As we're so fond of saying, more news soon...

● **'K240' is due for release in early 1996.**

(Below) Wow — your first glimpse of 'K240'! (Well, of a render from it, anyway.)

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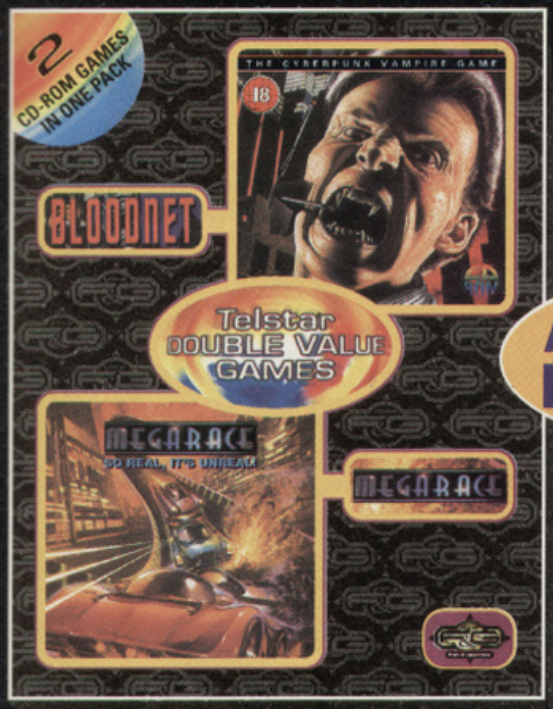

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Moving

David Upchurch travels to the windswept wilds of Cambridgeshire to greet the dawning of a new Millennium...

Like most UK software publishers, Millennium Interactive has a problem. An image problem, to be precise. Since the Cambridgeshire-based company was formed six years ago by Michael Hayward and Ian Saunter, its reputation has largely been built on the backs of successful Amiga and console games, such as James Pond and Robocod.

But the computer games market is changing rapidly. Since Commodore called in the receivers the future of the Amiga has been uncertain, a fact reflected in the declining sales of Amiga software. And the story hasn't been much brighter on the consoles, where software sales have also fallen alarmingly.

Naturally, Millennium has wisely reacted to these changes by investing heavily in PC development. But the problem remains that the company is still widely perceived by the public as Amiga/console specialists. However, as these early previews of Millennium's forthcoming games clearly indicate, that's not a situation that's likely to persist for long...

(Above) A scene from The Scroll's dramatic intro, in which an Egyptian businessman is brutally murdered by a weird shape-shifting assassin. (Below left) Irrespective of the 'career' the player chooses to pursue, a lot of time is spent at the Cairo museum researching ancient Egyptian mythology and cults. All the game's locations are accurately reproduced using information collated from old photographs and historical records. (Below right) The Scroll's distinctive graphic styling gives the Cairo locales a watery, heat-hazed look.

THE SCROLL

Of all Millennium's games in development, The Scroll is the one nearest to completion. If it looks a little familiar, then that's not surprising because it's heavily based on Daughter Of Serpents, a game Millennium released just over two years ago.

Daughter Of Serpents was a Lovecraft-inspired horror adventure set in 1920s' Egypt, in which you could choose to play either an Egyptologist, an occultist or a mystic battling an evil cult who want to unleash dread horrors upon the Earth. The neat thing was the plot changed according to which 'profession' you picked. Despite this, however, and some beautifully atmospheric graphics, the game was severely lacking in locations and puzzles, and was thus far too easy to complete.

But that's all changed in The Scroll. Thanks to the vast storage capacity of CD, the game's been enhanced to the Nth degree, and now comes with excellent digitised speech throughout. The game's plot has also been expanded and rewritten, so anyone who's played and finished Daughter Of Serpents will find this a totally fresh challenge.

"If The Scroll was a Hollywood movie then it'd be classed as a remake," says Chris Elliott, The Scroll's Producer. "It's not Shovelware; we haven't just taken Daughter Of Serpents and slapped it onto CD — it's a completely new adventure that uses Daughter Of Serpents as its foundation and takes full advantage of the benefits of CD-ROM."

The Scroll also marks the debut of Millennium's newly-developed graphic adventure interface, the Scripted Interactive Novel Operating System (or SIGNOS). SIGNOS is incredibly simple to use — the player simply moves the mouse pointer (or 'micon', as Millennium call it) over the objects on-screen and, if they can be interacted with, the micon changes form accordingly, i.e. to a hand if it can be picked up, or to an eye if it can be examined. Interacting with characters is equally simple — you just click on the person you wish to speak to, and then a Hypertext-like system lets you ask questions and make statements by clicking on key words in the speech bubbles that appear.

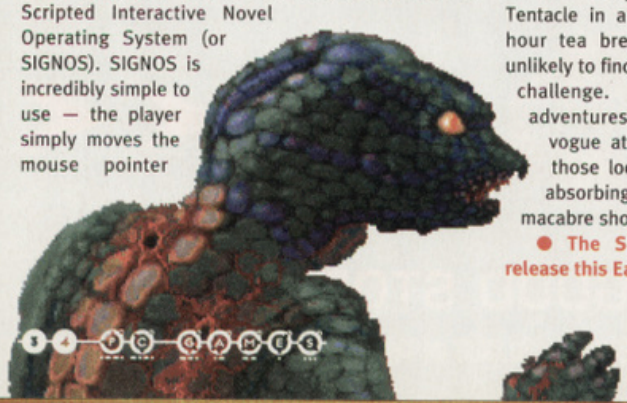
Millennium admits that The Scroll is not intended to be the World's toughest adventure, and so the sort of person who can complete Day Of The Tentacle in a morning (half-hour tea break included) is unlikely to find it that much of a challenge. However, horror adventures seem to be in vogue at the moment, so those looking for another absorbing voyage into the macabre should lap it up.

● The Scroll is due for release this Easter.

SILVERLOAD

Everybody loves a good western. And everybody loves a good werewolf horror story. And so (Millennium's theory goes) everybody should go bloody ape over a combination of the two, hence the existence of SilverLoad.

The game casts you as a lonesome gun-slinger travelling the wilder parts of the Wild West, a sort of grizzled, Clint Eastwood-style Graphic Adventurer With No Name. Sadly, your journeying is brought to an



With The Times

(Above) Some hapless settlers who have fallen foul of SilverLoad's befanged residents. (Below) SilverLoad is full of spooky effects.

(Above and below) Just a couple of brilliantly rendered images from Millennium's long-awaited Defcon 5.

Raiders Of The Lost Shark ?

Who's the wettest computer game hero you can think of? It's James Pond, of course, Millennium's attempt to out-cute the Marios and Sonics of this world. Sadly, his most recent and most playable platform outing, James Pond 3: Operation StarFl5H, never made it onto the PC (why, Millennium, why?). But Pond's legions of fans need not despair, because Millennium has plans to bring the sub-aquatic superhero out of retirement for one last PC-based mission...

...But don't expect another run-'n'-jump game. Poor Pond isn't as young as he used to be, so he's traded in his platform shoes for a point-'n'-click icon interface. Yes, in something of a radical departure for the Pond series, the new game will be a graphic adventure entitled Idaho Pond.

It's early days yet and the game's design work has only just begun, but Millennium did reveal that the game will be very much in the style of LucasArts' wacky Sam & Max Hit The Road. Also, in an unusual plot twist, the player won't actually meet Pond until at least half-way through the game! Look out for more news soon...

● Don't expect to see Idaho Pond before the end of the year at the earliest. And that's being optimistic.

abrupt and violent halt when your horse breaks its leg, forcing you to venture into the nearby town of SilverLoad in search of a fresh ride.

Unfortunately for you, SilverLoad's residents aren't the friendliest people you'll ever met. In fact, when the sun goes down and the full moon rises, they get positively unpleasant and will gladly tear out your throat before you can say "Go fer yer gun, stranger." Can you survive long enough to discover the town's grisly secret...?

Like The Scroll, SilverLoad employs Millennium's SIGNOS interface, so it's very easy to play. And it's also a CD-only game, so expect full digitised speech throughout.

● **SilverLoad is due for release this Summer.**

DEFCON 5

Defcon 5 (formerly known as Incoming) has been in development for ages now, but at last it's starting to come together — and very nice it looks too.

In Defcon 5 the player acts as newly-appointed custodian of an automated mining complex, which resides in a supposedly deserted region of space. However, no sooner have you placed a holophoto of your wife 'n' kids on your office desk than aliens attack. But as you struggle to fend off the invaders, you gradually discover clues that, once pieced together, reveal Things Aren't Quite What They Seem...

Full to over-flowing with superbly-rendered cutscenes and animations (created using the same technology that produced the spectacular special effects for TV shows such as Babylon 5 and Star Trek: The Next Generation), it may come as a surprise to learn that Defcon 5 is, at heart, a graphic adventure. However, it's interspersed with several action-oriented sequences, including 3D shoot-'em-up bits in which you attempt to repel attacking alien ships and Descent-style sections in which you battle intruders who have penetrated the complex's interior.

"What we're keen to avoid," says Keith Smith, Millennium's PR Manager, "is what we call 'The Microcosm Effect', where people buy a game for the brilliant graphics — and let's make no bones about it, these graphics *are* brilliant — only to get it home and discover that there's no game there. That won't be the case with Defcon 5."

Fair enough — and you can get an idea of how close Millennium has come to achieving this aim when we take a closer look at Defcon 5 later in the year.

● **Defcon 5 is due for release in the Autumn.**

DEADLINE

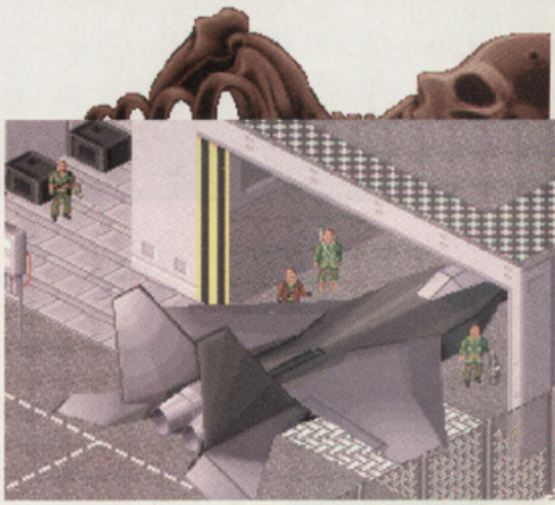
I thought PC GAMES' deadlines were bad news, but I have to admit that they're nothing compared to those imposed on anti-terrorist squads. Well, you decide which is worse: "If we don't get these pages to the printers in an hour, the issue will go on-sale late"; or "If our demands aren't met in an hour, we will kill a hostage every ten minutes until they are." Not much of a comparison really, is it?

Deadline aims to simulate the whole anti-terrorism business. Looking at the screenshots, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking X-COM. You're thinking Sabre Team. And you'd be thinking right. But Deadline is far more than just a clone of those games. For a start, the isometric-3D strategy stuff takes place in real-time instead of in turns. Via a map screen you plan your team's actions, assigning each member way-points and so forth, then the action ensues. At any point you can change those orders, or even take control of the action yourself.

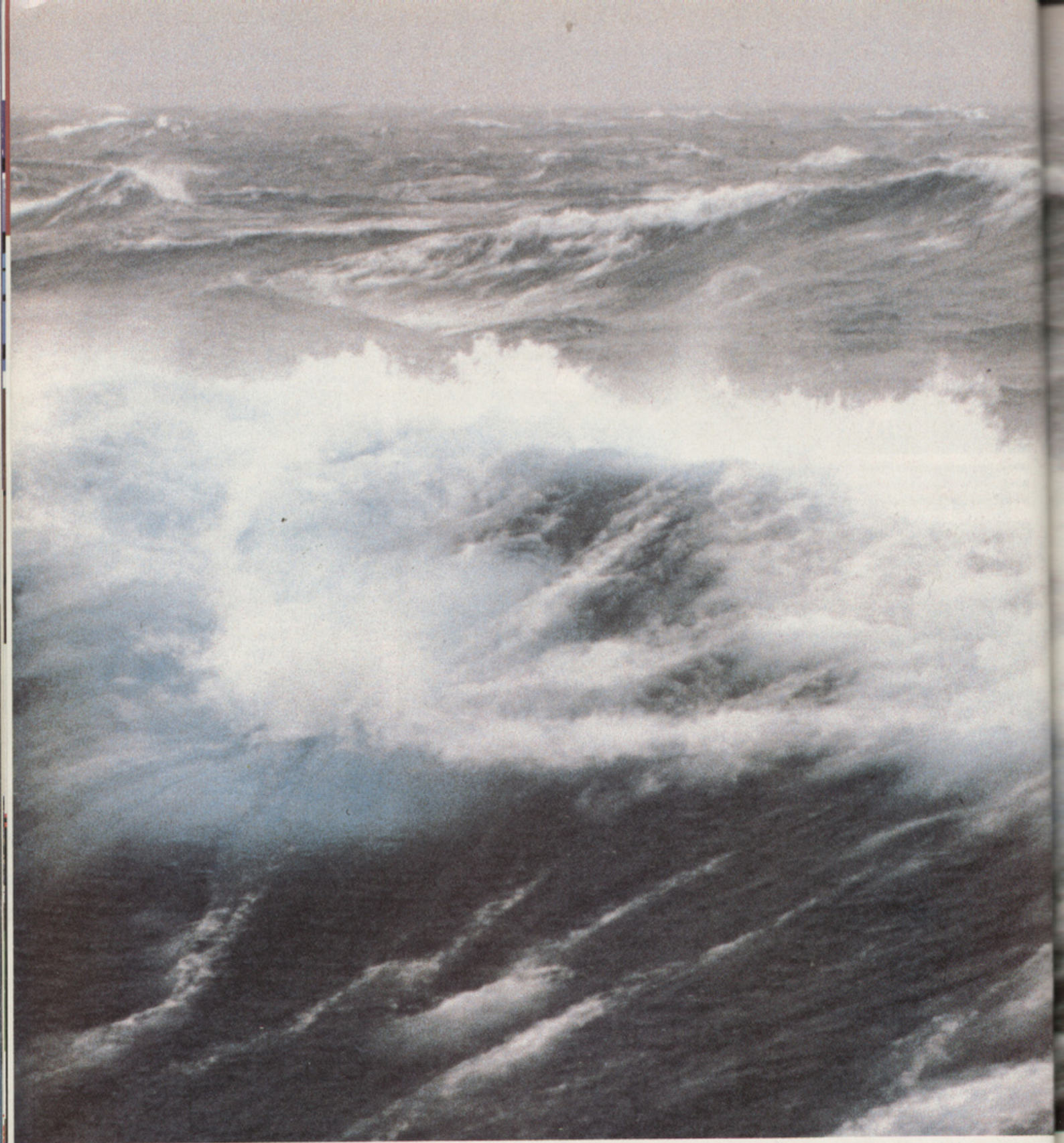
But that part of the game is only half the story. There's also a research side to things, as you try to find out information that will help you beat the terrorists, such as maps of the building they're holed up in, the individual terrorists' backgrounds, who their paymasters are — in fact, anything that might give you the upper hand in the negotiations. And of course, all the time you're doing this, time is trickling away...

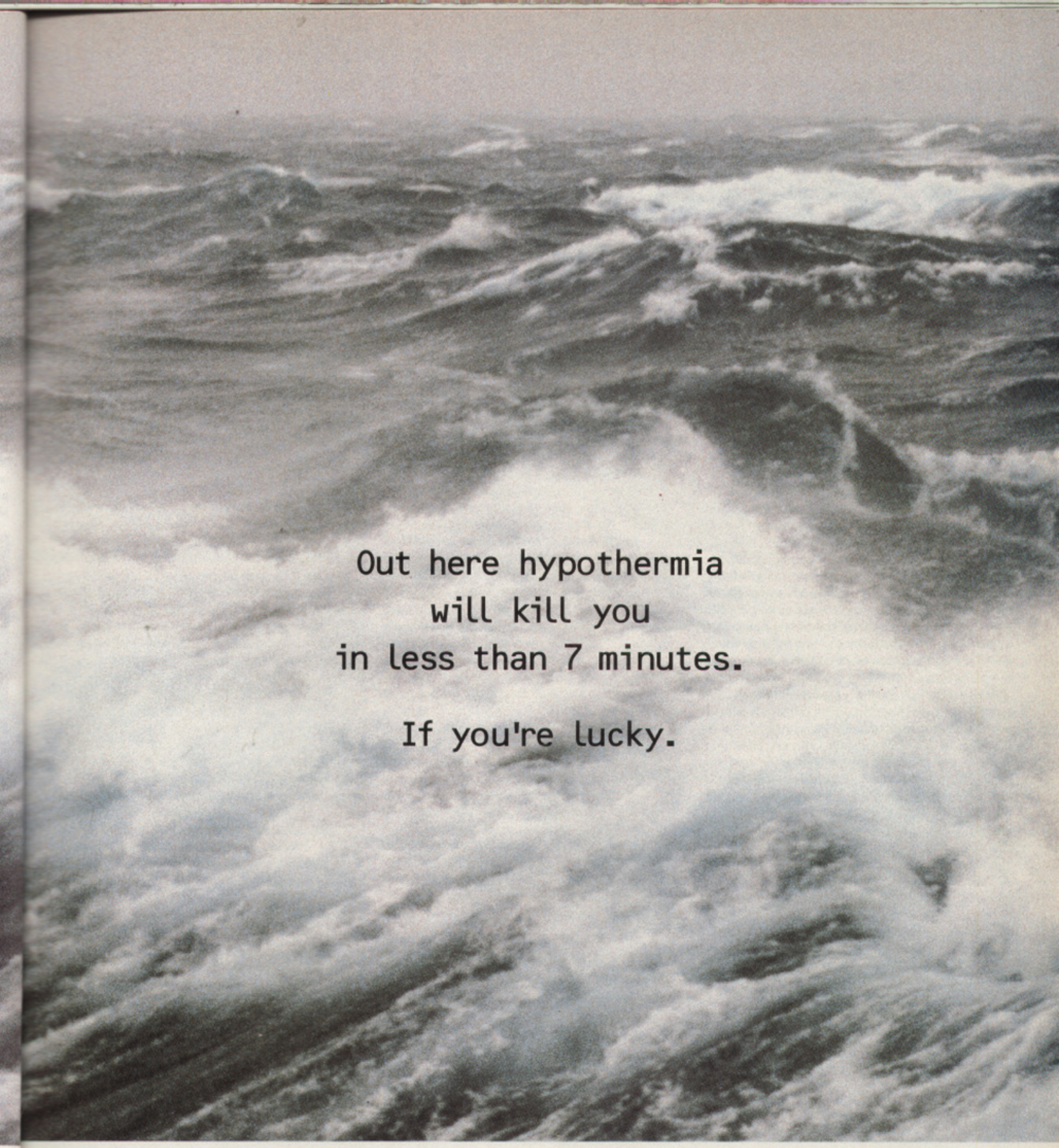
Deadline looks set to be a real winner, and we'll be examining it in more detail in a not-too-distant future issue of PC GAMES.

● **Deadline is due for release in the Autumn.**



(Above) This is an early 'test' shot of Deadline — in the finished game all of the figure graphics will be rendered.





Let's face it – you're in deep water. Stalking the sea beds of the world is a new, more terrifying enemy. They're smarter than before. They're more deadly. And if you don't go looking for them, they will come looking for you. Success will need brains not brawn. We're talking strategy, tactics, leadership. Bay Watch this isn't.

MICROPROSE

For IBM Compatibles and CD-ROM.

preview

The Need

If Falcon 4 is for sim-heads then Top Gun is for flyboys. Dean Evans knows all the words to 'Take My Breath Away', so he went to take a look at Spectrum Holobyte's next flight game.

GAME	TOP GUN
PUBLISHER	MICROPROSE
DEVELOPER	SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE
WORK *STARTED*	APRIL 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JUNE 1995

The Falcon series has traditionally been the domain of hard-core sim-heads, the sort of people who actually sit down and read the doorstop-sized manual, learn the tailspins, Immelmanns and loops, and can run through all the weapons on an F-16 if you corner them at a party. As for the rest of us, we just want to get up into the sky without any of that hassle. For us the quickstart option must be exactly that — we want to shoot down something within ten minutes or we're going to lose interest.

And this sort of thinking is precisely why Spectrum Holobyte is developing Top Gun. If Falcon 4 is a flight sim aimed squarely at advanced fliers, then Top Gun is a beginner's guide, an authentic flight sim (Spectrum Holobyte are actually calling it a 'flight game') without all the complex keyboard commands and the steep learning curve. With Top Gun, Spectrum hope that the player will be drawn in to the game not by the ultra-realism, but through the story and a hot-looking mix of video footage and cutting-edge 3D flight simulation technology.

"Top Gun is an action flying game," explains Neil Johnston, the game's Product Marketing Manager. "The central idea is that the player will actually experience the feeling of flying: the planes, clouds, sky, water and cockpits all look and behave realistically. But unlike a flight sim, Top Gun is a fast, action, easy-to-learn game in which the player gets to experience the thrill of dogfighting.

"The basic premise behind Top Gun is that you are Maverick," continues Neil. "What we're doing is taking the two-hour Top Gun film and making a forty-hour game out of it, expanding the plot and allowing you to dogfight your way through the movie."

Like in the movie you start the game at Miramar, the famous Top Gun fighter school. If you've never flown a sim before, it's here that you'll benefit from the multimedia training techniques that Spectrum hope will eventually do away with the 300-page manual. In addition, if you have a multi-player network or a modem, you can enrol and fly cooperative or deathmatch-style sorties against your friends. After all this, you eventually get to fly the campaign section of the game (which can only be played solo), where you are packed off around the world into multiple combat theatres including Libya, Cuba and Korea.

"What we're doing is taking the two-hour Top Gun film and making a forty-hour game out of it."

Neil Johnston, Top Gun's Product Marketing Manager.

Top Gun also uses 3D 'sets' similar to those in Falcon 4, and these are populated by numerous virtual actors who exist to guide you through the game and to weave together the two strands of story and simulation. Top Gun also uses the same 3D technology as Falcon 4. When I saw it, the ground detail used a mixture of bitmaps, Voxels and texture-mapped tiles, while the design team had scanned in photos of the original aircraft to get the textures absolutely right. Although Top Gun is being developed as a flight game, Spectrum has made a conscious effort not to cut back on the realism.

For example, as the F-14 is a two-seater aircraft, instead of being able to flip between the backseat position and the pilot's cockpit, Spectrum Holobyte has made your RIO an independent virtual character. As you concentrate on the flying, he'll talk to you and guide you through the dogfights.

(Above) One of the virtual sets at the Top Gun fighter school. Actors are filmed against a blue-screen background and then digitised. (Right) Top Gun in all its texture-mapped, Gouraud-shaded glory.

For Speed

(Above) The design team scanned in photos of the F-14 to get the textures of the Top Gun aircraft exactly right.
(Below) Even though Top Gun is billed as an "action flying game", Spectrum Holobyte hasn't been stingy with the realism.

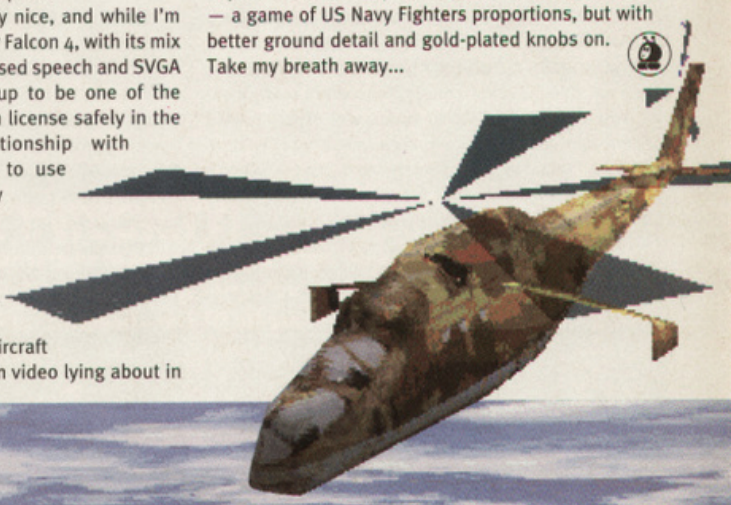
"The player will not have to operate a highly complex radar system in order to play and win," reveals Neil. "We've created an intelligent 'backseat buddy' — the weapons officer that sits in the rear of the F-14 behind the pilot. Just like in real air battles, he will help you through the dogfights as well as operate the radar and the long-range weapons."

Top Gun is looking extremely nice, and while I'm still wide-eyed over the specs for Falcon 4, with its mix of full-screen FMV footage, digitised speech and SVGA graphics, Top Gun is shaping up to be one of the games of the year. With the film license safely in the bag, Spectrum's close relationship with Paramount has allowed them to use footage from the movie and they are currently negotiating for the music rights.

The intro sequence to the game is superb, a full-screen FMV collage of the frenzied activity on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. If you've got the Top Gun video lying about in a cupboard at home, drag it out and watch the opening few minutes. It's very atmospheric — the sun rising, the F-14's and A-6 Intruders being prepped for take-off, that famous barrel-roll shot as a Tomcat hurtles off of the deck...

"Like Falcon 4," enthuses Neil, "you'll also be able to play Top Gun in a variety of screen resolutions, so the game is suited to any machine that is a 33MHz 486 or better. The low-res mode is the standard 320x200 VGA, medium resolution is also 320x200 but we're using a technique called pixel doubling to give the objects a sharper, cleaner look. Lastly, if you've got a PC that runs like lightning, Top Gun also has a stunning 640x480 SVGA mode."

Don't take my word for it, take a look for yourself. Top Gun is extremely atmospheric and very playable — a game of US Navy Fighters proportions, but with better ground detail and gold-plated knobs on. Take my breath away...



preview

Older & Wiser

The Hardened Adventurer™, AKA Alex Simmons, ties his bearskin boots and leaves in search of the sacred sequel to The Elder Scrolls: Arena.

GAME	THE ELDER SCROLLS: DAGGERFALL
PUBLISHER	US GOLD
DEVELOPER	BETHESDA SOFTWORKS
WORK *STARTED*	MAY 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	JUNE 1995

Having downed tools on the first Elder Scrolls game over a year ago, Bethesda Softworks have since been busy working on a follow-up to the well-received Arena. Subtitled Daggerfall, the sequel has been in development for over a year now and, as Bethesda are keen to stress, it boasts a brand new game engine that is a radical improvement over Arena's comparatively primitive 3D graphics system.

A first-person role-playing game in the same vein as the first game, there are, as you'd expect, a number of differences between Daggerfall and its parent. The first is the story behind the game. This time around you've been chosen to embark on a secret mission for the Emperor of Tamriel, and this entails roaming the vast countryside in search of evil-doers, dealing out instant justice with the sharp edge of your sword.

But in keeping with Arena, you aren't forced to carry out this mammoth quest if you don't really want to. You see, the beauty of Arena was that you had almost complete freedom to do whatever you wanted, wherever you wanted. This is also the case with Daggerfall, so if you don't feel like answering to the Emperor's every beck and call, don't.

Instead, visit one of the guilds in Tamriel, which often advertise for warriors and skilled adventurers and their notice-boards. Then, when you've boosted your skills (in Daggerfall, like most RPGs, character statistics are increased through experience) and collected bigger, better weapons, you can then respond to the Emperor's every whim.

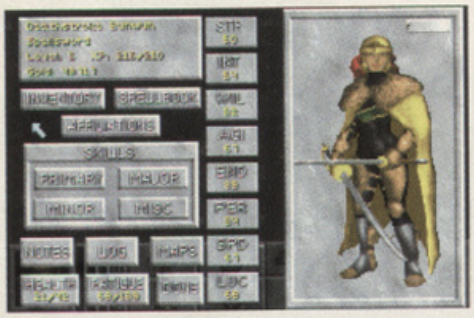
The Empire of Tamriel is a vast and diverse land, and any would-be adventurer will have to explore dank caves, towering castles and stretching moorland before uncovering the mystery of Daggerfall. There are even alternate dimensions and underwater realms to dive into, so don't expect to see all the sights of Tamriel in just a few hours.

Although Daggerfall is a stand-alone role-playing game, seasoned Elder Scrolls players will have a slight advantage over rookie RPGers, as characters from Arena can be ported across. That said, there's a complex adventurer creation utility that not only allows gamers to create completely new adventurers by defining distinguishing features, skills and abilities, but there's also the option to customise the existing character classes so each warrior, wizard or thief will literally be totally unique.

Experienced adventurers will also be familiar with the superb SpellMaker system, a revamped version of which appears in Daggerfall. While it's essentially the same as the original system, it features a load of new spells and potions, as well as a variety of powerful magic items with which to whip monster ass.

While on the subject of baddies and beasties, Daggerfall has loads of the buggers, from sword-swinging orcs to slimy swamp creatures to fangy wild boars. A few swipes from your battle axe should be enough to spill their blood, but rest assured they'll return, probably in greater numbers.

Promising to be every bit as absorbing and most definitely as challenging as Arena, the enhancements featured in Daggerfall will hopefully help rectify the minor gripes which were aimed at Arena. Whether this is the case remains to be seen when the game is released later this year. As ever, expect a comprehensive review in a future issue.



(Above) I bet you never thought you'd see a stats screen in a new role-playing game, did you?

(Above) According to Bethesda, this in a gang of wereboars that roam near the Bothidori marsh. So now you know.

(Above) As you can see, everything in the dungeons of DaggerFall is completely texture-mapped — even the roof!

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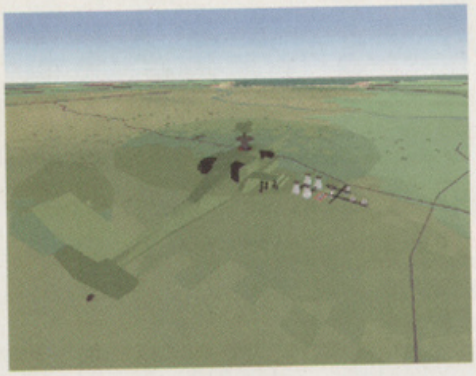
preview

Armed And

It ranks as the most powerful helicopter gunship in the world. It's got guns, missiles and rocket pods and it's all in glorious SVGA. Dean Evans takes a look at Digital Integration's Apache..

GAME	APACHE LONGBOW
PUBLISHER	DIGITAL INTEGRATION
DEVELOPER	IN-HOUSE
WORK STARTED	JANUARY 1994
DUE FOR COMPLETION	APRIL 1995

It's been almost two years since Digital Integration released Tornado, in which time the nine-strong programming team has been busy developing Apache Longbow on CD. It's a texture-mapped, multi-player helicopter sim that boasts SVGA graphics, rendered cutscenes and a very impressive 3D engine. It's a far cry from the basic polygons and weedy sound effects of DI's previous game. As well as revamping the ageing graphics, DI has also taken into account people's criticisms of Tornado.



"Tornado had quite a steep learning curve," explains David Marshall at DI, "and it put some people off. So we've taken a different route with Apache Longbow. Apache is very easy to get into — from the moment it loads up you're in the thick of the action. Also there's not such a daunting manual and we've tried to make the game a lot more fun, without sacrificing the depth of gameplay."

And it's depth of gameplay and attention to detail that people have come to expect from DI. With its bland polygon graphics, Tornado may not have been much of a looker but you could never doubt its much-vaunted hyper-realism.

In Tornado, every detail was reproduced exactly, from the cockpit layouts to the HUD and the sweep of the wings. Unfortunately, however, the very nature of the aircraft meant that, as the pilot, you just sat there for 95% of the time with nothing to do — there was only about two minutes of sheer hell over the target when you dropped your bombs and tried to run away as quickly as possible. Okay, it may well have been realistic, but it wasn't much fun to fly.

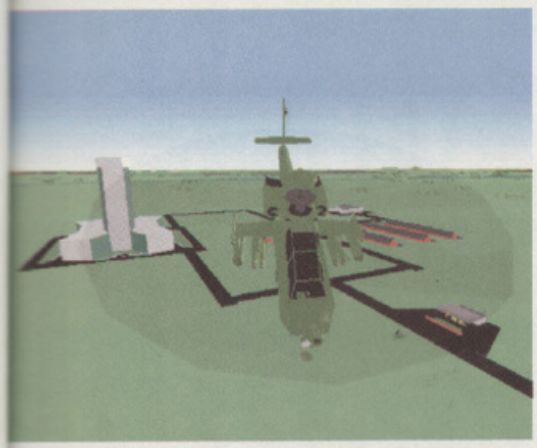
> "The Apache Longbow has never before been simulated to such a level of detail and authenticity, and it will be the definitive helicopter sim when it comes out in April."
>
> David Marshall, Digital Integration.

"Apache will be much more playable than Tornado," claims David Marshall. "The Apache is a front-line battlefield helicopter, the interaction with the enemy is a lot more focussed and you'll be in the thick of the battle a lot quicker. There's also much more to do, much more interaction with other helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft."

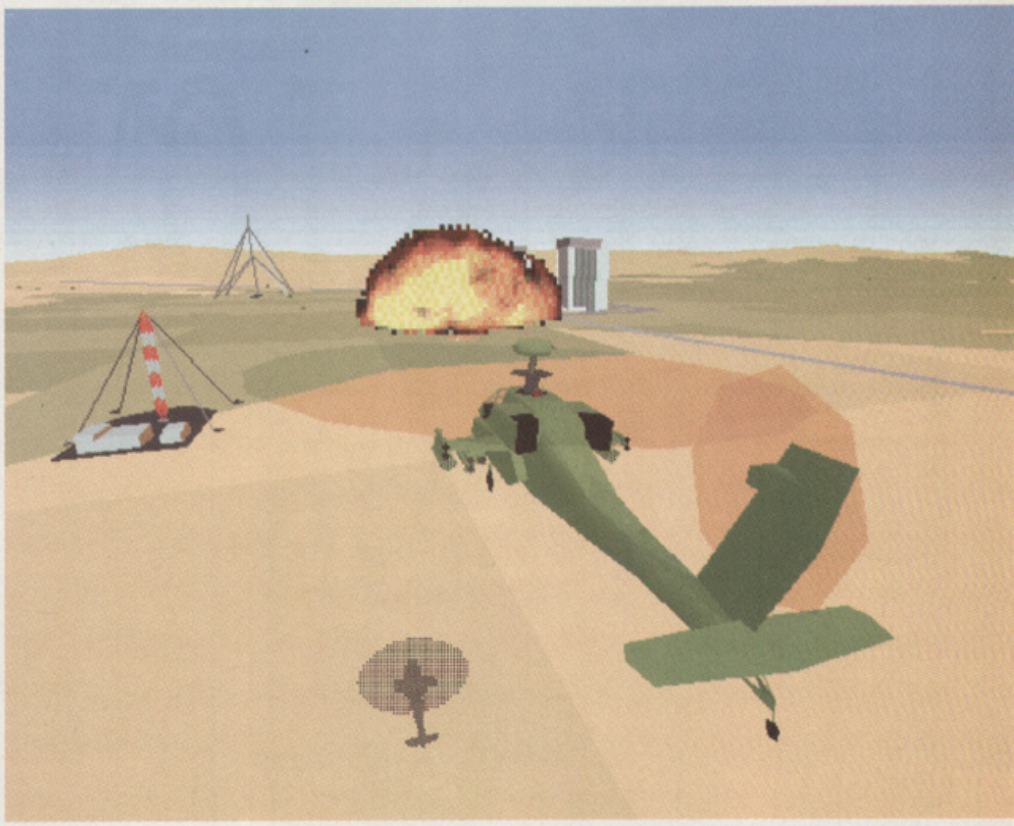
Obviously, the most noticeable thing about Apache is DI's 'next generation' 3D engine. After Tornado, the team had to redevelop the 3D to beef up the ground detail. Tornado had quite a high density of ground objects, but as you were always zipping above them at over 400 knots you didn't have time to stop and have a good look. As a helicopter rarely manages to get above 150 knots, if you're trying to create a sensation of speed, you've got to have a higher density of ground objects to make it work.

While most modern flight sims haven't managed to create realistic terrain, Apache has hills, ravines and deep canyons in abundance.

Dangerous



Apache is a mix of 640x480 SVGA graphics (above) and about 20 or so cutscenes (below) which illustrate key moments in the campaigns.



The Apache Longbow is an awesome weapons platform. The lozenge-shaped radar above the rotor blades allows the pilot to instantly identify and acquire targets and with his helmet-mounted targeting system, the aircraft almost becomes an extension of his body. Or something...

"Apache is our first game that uses DOS4/GW protected mode," says Marshall, "which has allowed us to tinker with Gouraud-shading, texture-mapping and various other graphical bells and whistles which will push a 90MHz Pentium to the limit. And this time we've had the processing power to model real world geographical areas, like Cyprus, Yemen and Korea."

All the landscapes in Apache are Gouraud-shaded and texture-mapped and, unlike other SVGA games such as US Navy Fighters, the terrain isn't flat with a couple of polygon mountains — it's full of rolling hills and deep, chiselled canyons. It's unfortunate that the screenshots here don't really do the game justice because if you're fortunate enough to have a 90MHz Pentium, Apache will move smoothly in full detail (and that's in 640x480 SVGA) across snow-capped peaks, fields and villages, with hardly a bump or a jerk to spoil the ride.

It's an impressive looking game, there's no doubt about that. Apache has two separate flight models — realistic and arcade — while the Tornado mission planner makes a return appearance, albeit in a cut-down form that's a lot simpler to use. And in yet another nod to the gaming mainstream, Apache also makes extensive use of pre-rendered animations which are used to illustrate key moments in the three theatre-based campaigns.

Of course, one of the more exciting features of Apache is the comprehensive multi-player mode. On any one mission, it seems that there will be a minimum of two helicopters, so you will always have access to a leader/wingman situation. With this in mind, Apache will support two-player head-to-head play via serial link and a comprehensive network mode, while a modem patch is planned for later in the year.

"The network option can support up to sixteen players," says David Marshall, "whereas on Tornado you only had limited head-to-head play. One very strong request that came back from users of Tornado was that they wanted to play pilot and navigator but the game was never designed like that. With Apache we've taken this into account, so you'll be able to have two people flying in the same helicopter, one playing the pilot and the other playing the co-pilot."

And if you've got a network, Apache will allow you to play cooperative missions or to battle against each other in a super free-for-all. Unfortunately you won't be able to play as a team (this is being pencilled in for the next version of Apache Longbow), but a 16-player air battle could very well end up as just Doom with helicopter gunships.

From what I've seen of Apache, I'm very impressed. The rolling 3D landscape is probably the best and most realistic that I've come across and with pre-rendered cutscenes, digitised speech and 60 missions in each campaign, I'll be very surprised if Apache doesn't get high review marks across the board when it finally hits the shelves.

"Digital Integration has modelled the Apache Longbow as closely as possible," enthuses David Marshall, "and the game features some very exciting weaponry, including the Longbow radar which allows the pilot to have automatic target designation and recognition, and helmet-mounted sight systems so the pilot can select a target just by looking at it. The Apache Longbow has never before been simulated to such a level of detail and authenticity, and it will be the definitive helicopter sim when it comes out in April."

Okay, it may be a tad biased, but Apache Longbow really *is* as good as it looks. And who can argue with pictures like these?

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reviews

You get the rough with the smooth when you work for PC GAMES. One day you're reviewing BioForge, the next it's the Atari 2600 Action Pack. Oh dear...

Reviewed On CD

Atari 2600 Action Pack	Activision	58
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HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO...

Everyone at PC GAMES is a complete gaming nut. That's why we know exactly what you want to see in a game review (or so we like to think).
So what do you get?

Well, you get all the info you need and no waffling — we get straight to the point. On top of that you get loads of big screenshots of the game in action, along with maps and diagrams helpfully illustrating any major gameplay features — after all a picture, as they say, speaks a thousand words.

Then we compare the big games with another of similar type in the 'It's A Bit Like...' panel. Typically this will be the best game in its genre so you'll probably be pretty familiar with it, thus giving you a handy point of reference.

The whole PC GAMES team plays every game reviewed and, although only one person's name appears on each review, the criticisms and Overall mark reflect all of our combined opinions, hopefully giving you a balanced view. Should any team member disagree violently with the rest, his comments will appear in a special box in the review.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

All the guff you need to know about who publishes the game, who developed it, its price and when it's due to be released. You even get a contact 'phone number to call if you want more info.

Details the minimum machine specification as recommended by the software company, along with how much valuable hard disk space it takes up and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

The Overall Score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff — you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it.

The coveted PC GAMES STAR is awarded to any game scoring 90% or over, indicating that the game in question is an essential addition to any gamesplayer's software collection.

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- The dogfighting is tense, exciting and looks fabulous.
- Intriguing plot that keep you hooked from the start.
- Superb SVGA graphics and excellent sound.

...AND THE BAD

- Needs a monster PC to run at anything near a playable speed.
- The missions lack depth and variety.

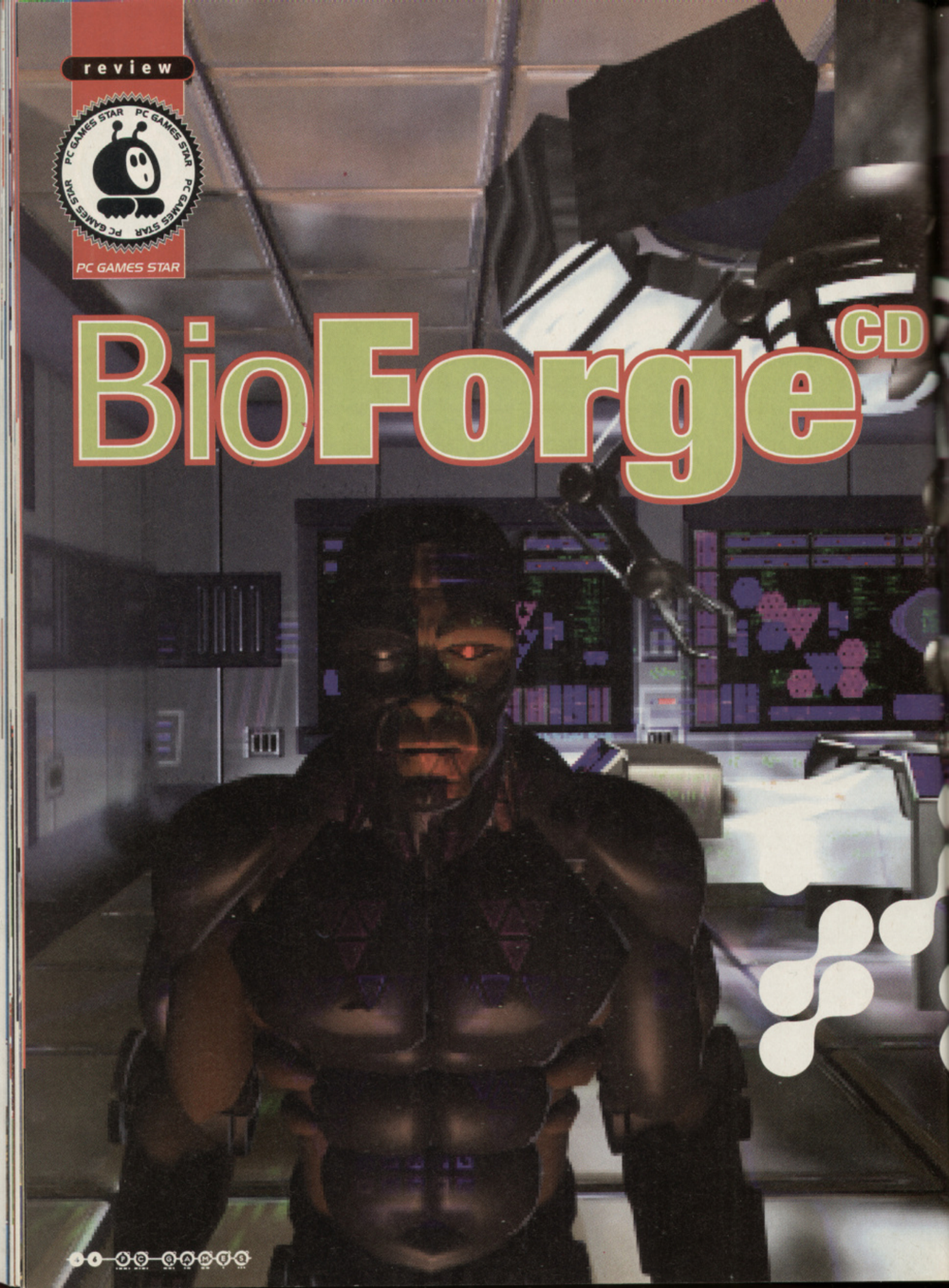
Overall

92%

review

PC GAMES STAR

BioForge CD



Alex Simmons once went to a fancy dress party as R2-D2. Does that make him eligible to review Origin's new 3D masterpiece?

When Lex gets drunk, he *really* gets drunk. One minute he was chucking back tequila slammers in a seedy Soho bar, the next... God knows. As his eyelids slowly unpeeled and the darkness began to focus, a deep, booming voice rattled through his ears as the buzzing whirr of a frighteningly-close circular saw echoed around the room. "I'll begin the operation now", the voice commanded. Lex, carefully considering his options, hastily replied: *"OH SHI..."*

Thing's aren't looking too good for Lex. Not only has he lost his memory and half his vital organs, he's mislaid his tube ticket which means he'll have to catch a cab home. But at the moment he has more important things to worry about. Awakening in a 6 by 10 stainless steel cell, Lex's attention is immediately drawn to a rather large robot guard trundling towards him, wielding an unfeasibly large sedative needle.

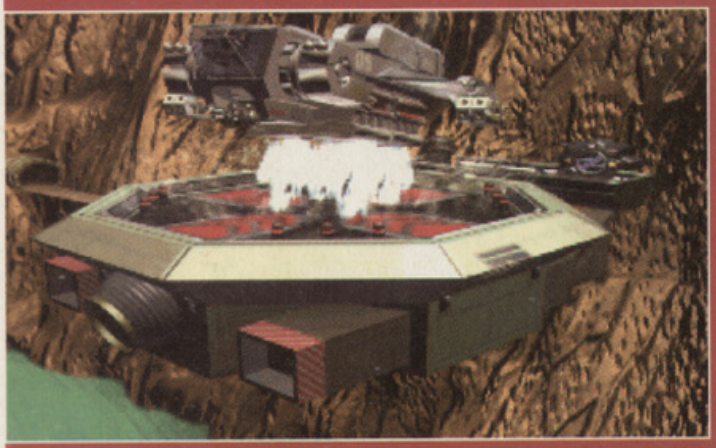
It's right about now that you should panic, for you are Lex and he is you, or something like that... Anyway, back to Lex's trouser-filling dilemma. Kitted out with his shiny new armour plating and cybernetic implants, he has two options: either audition for the role of the T-2000 in the next Terminator movie or, more realistically, beat the crap out of the bloody interrogation droid.

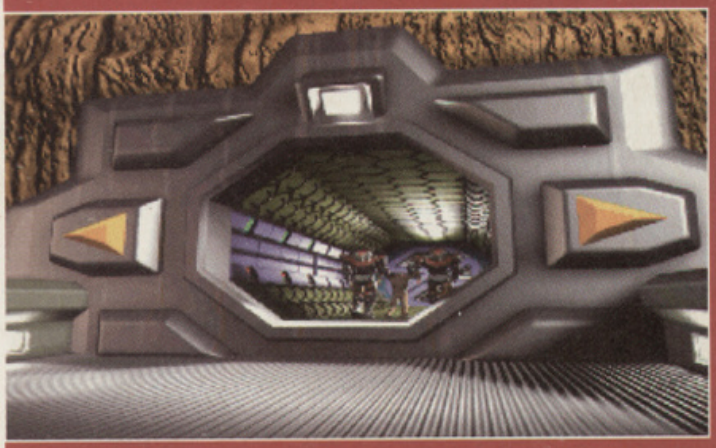
Naturally, the latter is the correct choice (although seeing bad boy Arnie battling against an equally charismatic synthetic actor called Lex would have been amusing), so slipping into combat mode and assuming the *de rigueur* boxing stance, Lex delves into his stash of punches and kicks, an impressive array that would even make Eric 'Kung-Fu' Cantona jealous.

Swinging his size 15s with the greatest of ease, Lex can place a well-aimed knee in the robot's privates (an excellent battle plan with only one downfall — the robot doesn't actually have genitalia of any shape or form), or can just lash out with his steel toe-capped boots. This is an extremely effective method of attack, although it can be abused. How? Alternately kick out both legs and it appears as though Lex is doing the Can-Can — particularly amusing when accompanied by Frank Sinatra's 'New York, New York', I'm sure you'll agree.

Lex is also pretty handy with his dukes, and can punch through solid steel doors as if they were made of tin foil. However, as Han Solo once said, "Hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a good blaster at your side", and how right he was.

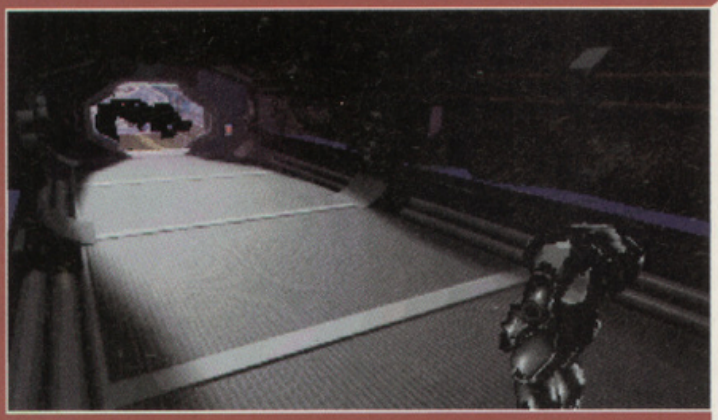
It's true. You haven't got a hope in hell's chance of knocking down a five ton BSB (that's Big Scary Bugger, non-Cyber speakers) with only your fists. A much better idea is to grab a blaster





The Morning After...

14 pints and 8 tequilas later, Lex awakens in the operating theatre... *WHAT!!!* God knows what happened after he left the pub but, boy, it must have been a good night out.



Oh dear. This seemingly quiet, rather attractively decorated corridor isn't as homely as Lex was hoping. See that *very* large robot in the distance? His gun spells death, see, D-E-A-T-H. Lex, start panicing...

Hey, Lex is just too cool. Even though it looked as though his demise was almost certain, by dodging the robot's missiles bad boy Lex managed to cook that mutha. Toasted marshmallows, anyone?

This time Lex wasn't so fortunate. Hit squarely in the chest by one of the sentry droid's mini-nukes, Lex is thrown against the door as a stream of laser bolts seal his fate. Time to reload, cowboy.

from a nearby corpse (don't worry, there's plenty of them around) and let rip with photon lead!

What's more, you can even bounce laser blasts off shiny walls and not-so-shiny Mondite troops, shooting around corners 'til your heart's content. Not only does this prevent you from risking your own chromium ass (unless you're careless and one of your own shots rebounds right back at you), it also doubles as a rather attractive light show, perfect for entertaining guests at dinner parties and christenings.

Talking of dinner, if you're thinking of grabbing a bite to eat soon, hang on a minute. You see, as well as wielding hefty laser guns and indulging in a little hand-to-hand combat, Lex isn't afraid to use more adventurous weapons, like a severed arm for example. As if that wasn't bad enough, the dismembered limb Lex is swinging belongs to the guy he's currently pummelling to death! Still, you have to be resourceful in this sort of game.

Back in the cell, Lex skilfully deals with the guard (with his fists — blasters don't appear until later in the game), and manages to short-circuit the force-field in the process. The gate still flickers on and off, but by running like crazy (which is difficult with feet like lead weights) Lex can avoid frying his chips as 50,000 volts surges through his cyborg body.

Outside in the corridor, it's here that you first notice the graphical excellence of BioForge. Although the game could be described as Alone In The Dark with laser guns, the basic polygon shapes of Edward Carnby and co. are blown away by the complex texture-mapped graphics and detailed backdrops that bring Lex and his surroundings to life. BioForge really is gorgeous to look at — compared to this full-bodied beauty, silicon-chested Pamela Anderson looks gaunt and unattractive.

In fact, Lex is a bit of a good-looking guy himself (although I would like to point out he's not normally my type — I prefer someone with more flesh and less aluminium). As Origin, the game's developers, are keen to stress, Lex is a synthetic actor, which basically means that while he moves and acts like a normal human being (well, almost normal), he's much more versatile than real-life actors pasted over computer-generated backdrops. For example, can you imagine Dennis Hopper, star of GameTek's Cyber-adventure Hell, high-kicking in a suit of bulky power armour? And because Lex is completely computer-generated, he blends in with the scenery more effectively than fuzzy FMV characters.

He's not a stiff either, a problem that many other rendered characters suffer from. Most walk with their legs hardly bending at the knee, so rather than strolling casually along they tend to chicken-step Adolf Hitler-style! While we're on the subject of unrealistic characters, the majority of them are far too shiny as well. Let's be honest, do you know anyone with blemish-free skin that reflects more light than a 20-foot mirror? No, I didn't think so.

It's a bit like...

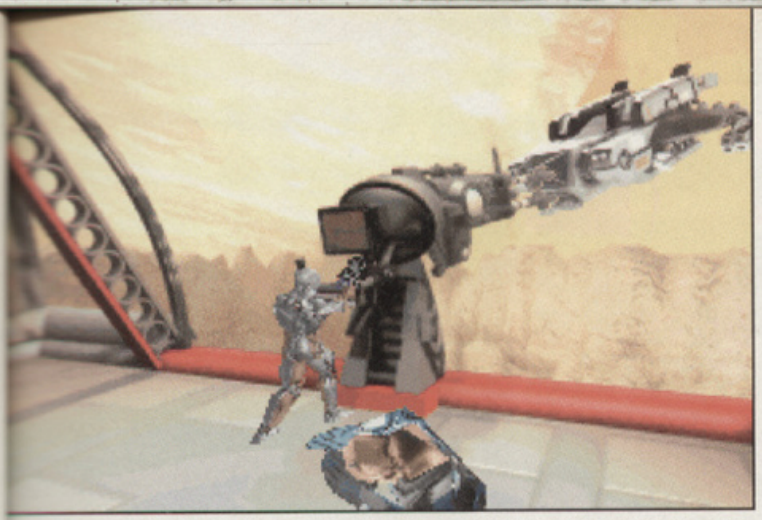
...Alone In The Dark 3, only much, much better. Having said that, Infogrames' spooky graphic adventure is still a damn good game and has all the tense, puzzle-based gameplay of the awesome original. Although it's visually more basic than BioForge (but then what isn't?), in terms of gameplay you could do far worse.

Think Man, Think!

Even though BioForge is cram-packed with more action than a Schwarzenegger movie, it's also got its fair share of puzzles. Here's one little riddle Lex faces having just escaped from his cell. Our cyborg buddy needs to get inside the sewer system, but a large scorpion-like beaties just won't let him past.

Opening the iris valve and turning the wheel on the back wall, Lex releases the Cryo fluids. Slowly the deep-freeze chambers lining the room begin to warm up and their occupants to defrost.

On consulting the Cryo status panel, Lex soon fills his Cyber-pants having realised chamber 1 is storing a rabid, blood-sucking Cyber-raptor with bigger (and sharper) front teeth than Esther Rantzen!



This is more like it! Fed up with his puny laser blaster, Lex grabs the biggest gun he can lay his hydraulic hands on and takes time off for a bit of target shooting. Just one thing... where's the trigger?

Wa-hay, Lex gets kitted out in a smart new suit of power armour, complete with whirring hydraulic limbs and flashing lights. This hard suit allows him to survive in vacuums. (No, not vacuum *cleaners*, stupid).

This is another area where BioForge breaks all the rules. Lex has been through hell, his cyborg body battle-scarred and scratched. His general appearance deteriorates as he is wounded, too. If he's stabbed in the chest, blood pours from the wound; if Lex takes a bullet in the leg, he then walks with a limp until recharged.

The recharging process is done by consulting Lex's in-built computer and channelling electric current (from his internal batteries) into the biological repair facility which slowly heals his wounds. If his battery runs dry, though, this option is rendered useless until a replacement power cell is found. If nothing is done to rectify the damage sustained, Lex's injuries become so bad that each time he tries to take a step he ends up falling flat on his face!

It's this tremendous attention to detail and sheer quality of animation that builds an atmosphere, and also helps gamers to to relate with Lex's problems — after just a few hours of playing BioForge I felt I'd almost known Lex for years, recalling those fond memories of playing cowboys and Indians in the park and... (yes, I think that's enough — Dave).

The characters are made even more realistic (is that possible?) by the excellent digitised speech that features throughout. I do have one, teeny-weeny gripe, though — I think Lex could have dropped a few of the sad macho-isms, like exclaiming "Eat light, you stupid machine" having just wiped out another 'bot with his laser. Oh well, we can't expect perfection all the time.

But what I have come to expect from a game of this visual calibre though is non-existent gameplay, but yet again BioForge comes up trumps in this department. Unlike countless other interactive movies (yes, Origin have decided to 'bless' BioForge with that God-awful term), BioForge actually has a bit of meat lurking beneath its oh-so-glossy shell.

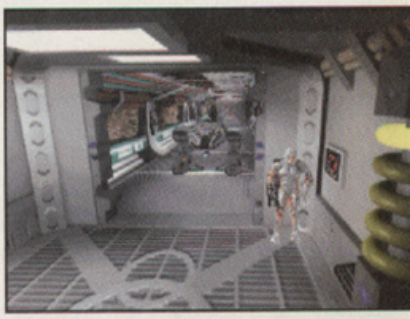
In this game you're not restricted to moving along pre-determined paths or to simply aiming a cursor and firing in some over-rated, over-priced multimedia Operation Wolf. Oh no, in BioForge you're *completely* free to move anywhere, fiddle with anything and shoot anyone — even yourself! Sounds good? It is.

As I mentioned before, BioForge is a bit like Alone In The Dark and Ecstatica, in that the action is viewed from a variety of 'camera' angles and that the player can explore every corner of every room if they so desire. Objects of significance (anything from levers to computer terminals to switches) can be used in someway with the general action command, and objects picked up off the floor are activated in much the same way.

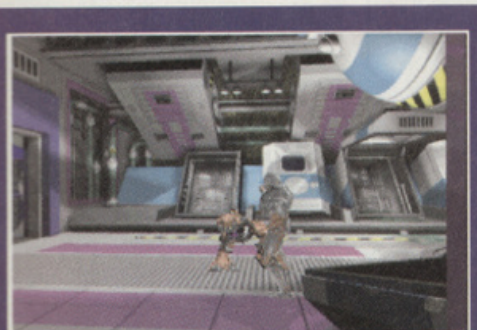
Lex's log book is the first item you'll stumble across and, like other personnel files and data banks, it contains valuable clues hidden in page after page of otherwise mindless Cyber-waffle. Thankfully valuable hints are fairly prominent, and are usually access codes to unlock security doors or passwords to power-up computer terminals. Solutions to puzzles can also be found if you look hard enough.

BioForge isn't just a plain and simple beat-'em-up or indeed shoot-'em-up for that matter — it's a sprawling arcade adventure that balances out the frantic action sequences with less traumatic puzzle sections (which are, I hasten to add, just as challenging). If you've played any of the Alone In The Dark games you'll know roughly what to expect — first a little bit of action, then a puzzle to solve, then it's back to the gung-ho battles. It's a formula that works extremely well, especially in BioForge.

Because of the game's brilliant science-fiction setting Origin were pretty much free to create whatever they liked, and therefore variation in puzzles, enemies and locations is something that BioForge is spilling over with. The backdrops, which are both extremely detailed and very atmospheric, range from dark, stretching metallic corridors faintly illuminated by flickering strip-lights, to hi-tech computer rooms lined with flashing LEDs and glowing console screens, to treacherous rocky mountains covered in perilously narrow iron walkways.



(Top) Scaredy-cat Lex hides from yet another robot. (Above) Shut the reactor down before it blows! (Below) God, not another BSB! Run away!



There's nothing for it but to fight with your bare fists, boy. Forget Queensbury rules, though — anything goes in this boxing ring so go for its nadgers. He hasn't got any? Well kick it in the face then!

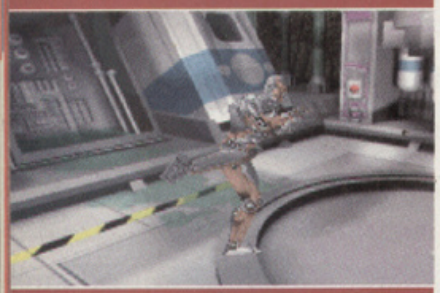
Ha! Kicking the crap out of the pansy Cyber-raptor, Lex strides up to the switch on the far wall and opens the iris valve. The KO'd creep falls through the hole and into the clutches of Scorpion man.

Releasing the Cryo fluids once again, Lex listens as the battling beasts are frozen in mid-punch! You see, problems *can* be solved without resorting to violence. Well, most of the time, anyway.

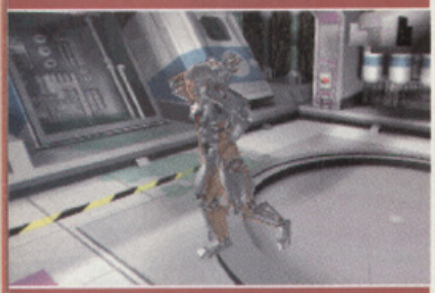
Come Dancing

Lex's range of hand-to-hand attacks is formidable, and most are just as effective as a shot from a blaster pistol. Here's a few of his best moves.

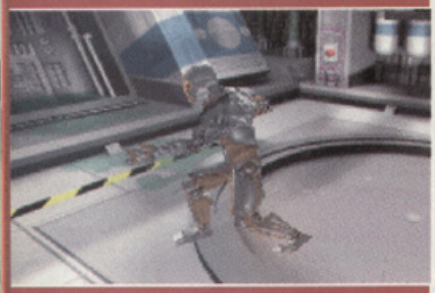
Can-Can
A nice dance move and pretty neat in combat, too.



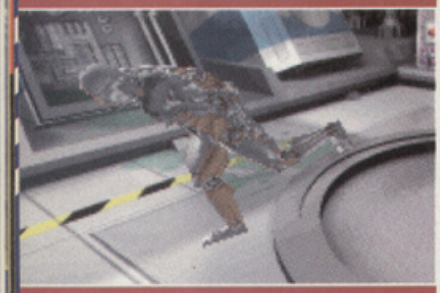
Groin Kick
So much for not hitting below the belt, eh?



Overhead Thwack!
Lex's deadly Agadoo dance.



Low Punch
Low Punch? Love-spud grapple more like.

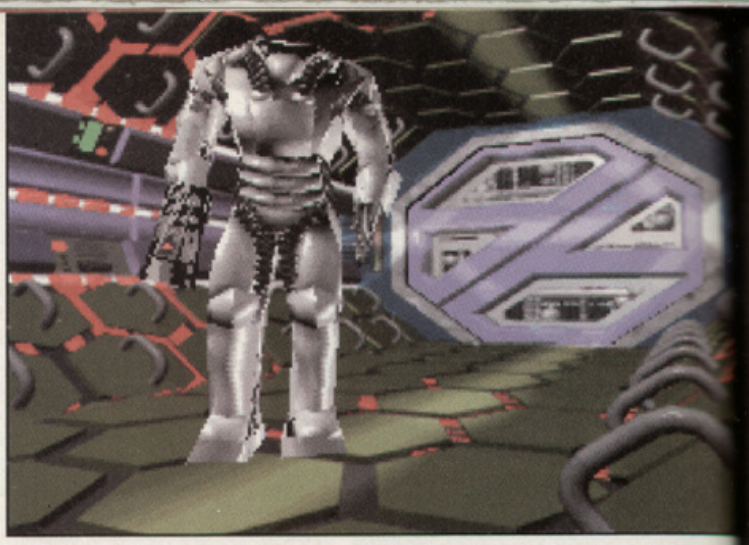


Headbutt
Go 'BOK!' crazy with Lex's Glaswegian kiss.

The game is pretty huge too, and it'll take more than just a few hours to complete Lex's quest to rediscover his identity. Unless you're some sort of gaming God, I reckon you'll become unstuck *at least* three or four times throughout the game — it was the shutting down the reactor before it exploded that had me stumped. But with a little thought and perseverance you shouldn't have any major problems solving the puzzles — thankfully there are no utterly illogical stick-the-llama-in-the-tapioca-to-open-door-type conundrums in BioForge.

One of the game's few annoying features is the element of trial and error. Occasionally there are sequences that give you little or no time to react to Lex's impending doom and this is downright annoying, not to mention unrealistic. Who in their right mind would walk off a 100-foot ledge without looking down first? This, of course, prompts players to use the game's nine SAVE GAME slots, but it's still more than a bit unfair, I'm sure you'll agree.

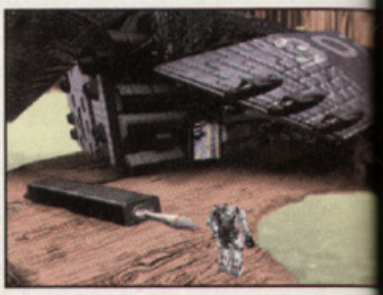
This minor annoyance hardly detracts from the game itself which is, in big, bold letters, **BRILLIANT.** Initially I was rather sceptical about BioForge because, after all, it's been in development for what seems like *aeons* and the project is extremely ambitious. But Origin have pulled it off with flying colours — the result of God knows how many man-years of work is arguably one of the best games of '95.

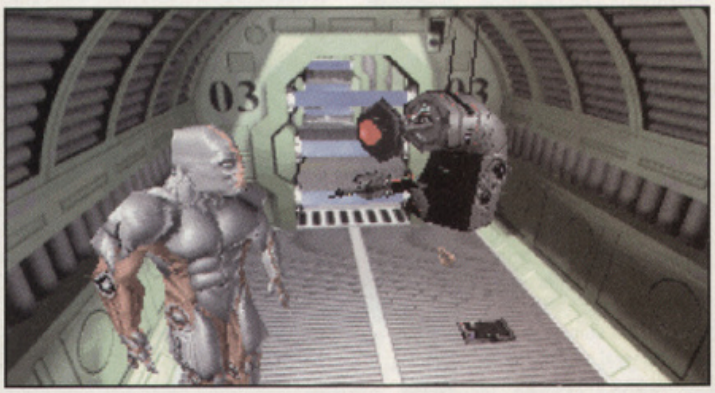


Keeping in form with the majority of Origin's other ground-breaking releases, BioForge is yet another game that pushes the PC to its limits. Therefore to get the best out of it you'll need to run BioForge on a 66MHz 486/DX2 at least, preferably a Pentium P90. That said it will run on a less powerful 33MHz 486, but to say it's a bit slow is something of an understatement.

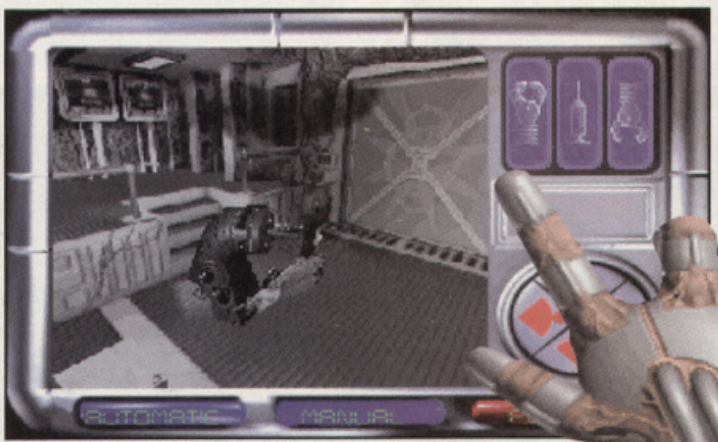
If you're lucky (and rich) enough to own one of these monster machines, BioForge most definitely falls into the 'must buy' category. If not, you may find the lack of speed a tad annoying. No matter what machine you own, though, BioForge is one of the most technically impressive, highly polished and gripping games of late, and stands light years ahead of the comparatively archaic Alone In The Dark games.

(Above) Do I look cool or what?
(Below) See that very large missile on the ground? Would you believe Lex actually drops his blaster and uses this beastie later in the game!





That's an extremely large needle pointing in your direction! Coming round in his cell, Lex must disable the interrogation droid and escape this 6x10 hell-hole to re-discover his true identity.



This is one of BioForge's neat intermission sequences, in which the sentry droid is moved using the computer terminal. The robot is used to open the blast door in the control room.

BIOFORGE CD

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THE GOOD...

- Advanced 3D texture-mapping and realistic character animation makes BioForge one of the best-looking games of recent months.
- Faultless presentation, absorbing gameplay, challenging action sequences and complex (but not-*too*-tough) puzzles — this has got the lot.
- Above all, BioForge is like an super-sticky cream bun — it's bloody hard to put down!

...AND THE BAD

- Apart from the fact it needs a pretty powerful PC and the minor trial-and-error gripe, none whatsoever.

Overall

93%

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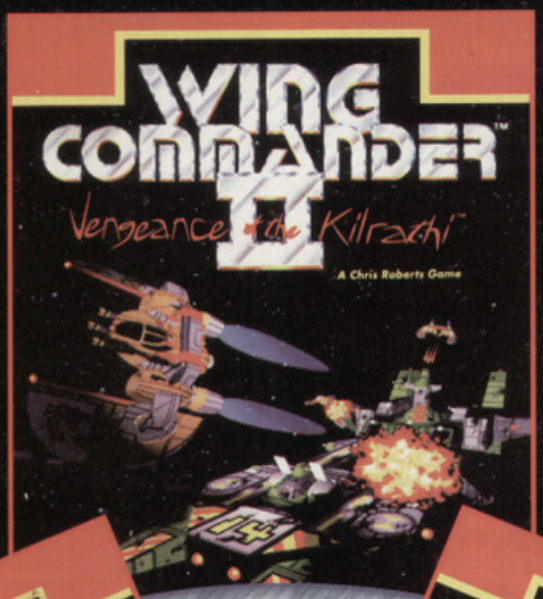

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Super Karts CD

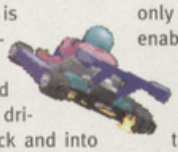
Alex Simmons lives by the seat of his pants, which is why he got to check out the Virgin's new fast-paced racer.

Driving a kart through tight chicanes and around sweeping corners is as close to Formula 1 racing as most of us will ever get, the exhilarating thrill of speeding along just inches from the ground at 30 miles an hour being enough to prize the ridiculously high race fees from any grown man's clenched fist.

Yup, karting sure is an expensive hobby, and one which is particularly dangerous if, like me, you can't drive to save your life. A safer and more reasonably priced alternative is Manic Media's zippy racing game, Super Karts.

While it may not have all the realism of the real thing, what Super Karts does have by the bucket-load is top-notch gameplay. It takes just a few minutes to master the kart controls, but it's gripping enough to provide hours of adrenalin-pumping track-side action.

It also has loads of courses. To be precise, 16 texture-mapped tracks from around the globe, from the sandy circuits in Los Angeles to the snow-capped chicanes of Russia. Each is cluttered with an assortment of obstacles, including water hazards and mud pits that'll send careless drivers careering off the track and into the tyre walls. There are also two secret courses hidden within the game.



The courses can either be played in the full or in the cut-down half season, or even in the game's arcade mode. Racing over a season allows you to compete on every single track even if you fail to muster up a single victory, while the arcade game is much, much tougher. To progress from one track to the next you must finish in the top three, otherwise a life is lost and you'll have to return to race on the same circuit once again.

Winning a race is not only beneficial to your current league standing, but also to your bank balance. Stacks of cash is vital and without it you'll be left on the starting grid. Various add-ons and engine boosts must be purchased to give you the edge in competition.

There are eight such bonuses, from cheapo one-use turbo chargers to expensive engine upgrades which crank up the top speed of your kart, albeit only slightly. Super Grips supposedly enable your car to corner without skidding but aren't particularly useful while opting for a higher grade of tyre proves more effective, but then again they don't come cheap. The oil drums are pretty useless too, as the other drivers seem to just skim across the non-stick slick without even so much as a skidmark. Typical.

Increasing the size of the fuel tank and the strength of the chassis increases your chance of surviving through long races (each race lasts from anything between two to forty laps), while points and lives can be bought to augment your chances of becoming the karting champ.

Bonuses are also scattered around each circuit, so it's possible to top up on cash, oil, Super Grips and turbo boosts

Blimey, his kart's on fire! Quick, form a human chain and pass buckets of water down the line...

Goodies galore in the one-stop shop, so save, save, save to construct the kart from heaven.

There are eight stereo-typical drivers to choose from, and even through they look very different from each other, their individual characteristics don't actually affect the way they drive.

The screen splits in half horizontally for the two-player game. While it's great fun, it's nothing compared to the awesome eight-player races set up over a network.

All Around The World

USA

The sandy beach track in LA is the easiest of the lot. The long, stretching straights and wide corners should cause competent drivers no problems at all.

BRITAIN

This fairly simple Docklands course is dogged by one hazard — a wickedly tight hairpin bend which that must be taken s-l-o-w-l-y .

GERMANY

Set in an the middle of an industrial wasteland, the German track is again plagued by a dangerous hairpin, but also has a rather pathetic water jump.

INDIA

Resembling those tacky curry houses frequented only after guzzling gallons of extra strong lager, the elaborate Indian circuit is one of the hardest.

AUSTRALIA

The track from Down Under is fast, so use your turbos to skim across the water pools. Kick in the Super Grips on the last corner though.

BRAZIL

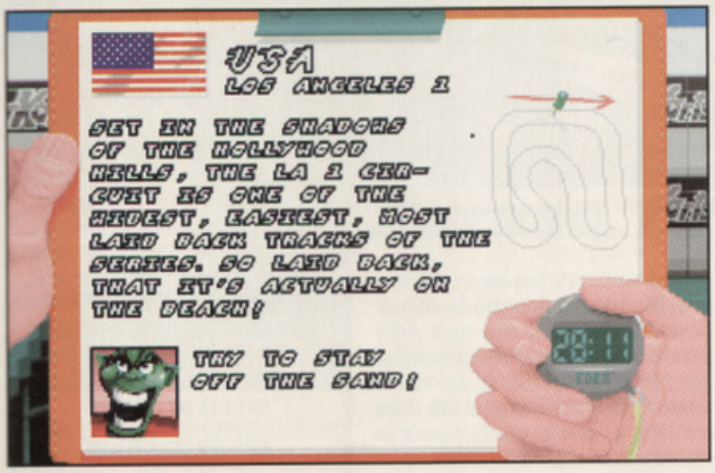
Plush green grass is the slippery surface for the Sao Paulo circuit, which has very few straights and a helluva lot of winding bends.

RUSSIA

Very narrow and covered in snow, the Russian karting track is difficult to negotiate due to black ice and the awesome jump half-way around.

JAPAN

Racing around the night-time neon-lit streets of Tokyo is pretty damn hard. The course splits in two very narrow straights, so keep your speed down.



Before each race the green guy on the left gives you the low-down of the next course, detailing the best points to use turbos and Super Grips.

without easing off on the gas. Fuel is miraculously topped up by driving non-stop through the pit lanes!

But no matter how many power-ups are bolted onto your kart, you won't win if you can't streak along the straights or shift through the chicanes. The game's four difficulty levels affect the skill of the rival competitors, changing Sunday drivers into rabid speed freaks who won't think twice about ramming you off the course!

The kart handles fairly realistically (which is hardly surprising considering Benetton F1 experts were consulted during development), so you can't take each corner at top speed because the back end of the kart will slide out. It's therefore essential that you learn the layout of every single track, working out when to break and when to kick in the turbos.

Even on the hardest setting, I reckon it won't take much more than a few days racing to perfect each course. The reason for this is because many of the tracks can be won by hitting the turbo at the start to get ahead of the field, then easing off and taking the rest of the race easy. Providing you don't slide off the track, the other drivers will find it hard to catch up, let alone to overtake on some of the narrower straights.

Like Super MarioKart on the SNES — or any other decent racing game for that matter — you'll probably return to Super Karts because it's simple, addictive and, above all, fun. However, racing around the same tracks time after time will eventually become tiresome, maybe even tedious, and it's only with the inclusion of the two-player game and network facility that Super Karts holds any real long term appeal.

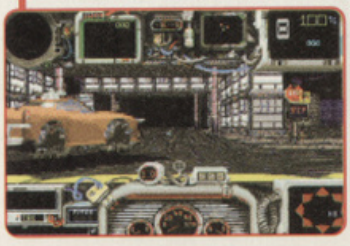
The split-screen game remains surprisingly playable even though the display size is drastically reduced. The resolution does suffer during two-player head-to-head competitions though, and the usually crisp graphics are automatically replaced by blurred, sometimes blocky karts and circuits. This is obviously less of a problem on a high-spec PC, but it can be a real pain in the backside if your playing Super Karts on a meagre 25MHz 486.

The multi-player option is vastly superior to the two-player split-screen game, as up to eight drivers can compete simultaneously. This is, as you'd expect, extremely good fun and often provides more of a challenge than the predictable computer-driven cars.

At the moment though Super Karts can *only* be linked across a network, although a patch disk expected shortly to enable serial and modem link-ups.

It's a bit like...

...Quarantine. GameTek's gory taxi cab ride from hell uses similar 3D texture-mapped graphics, but rather than racing around a load of circuits you must screech through bleak city streets, gunning down other cabbies to reach cash-waving fares first! Doom on wheels? It sure is.



So there you have it. While Super Karts doesn't offer anything particularly new or original, there's no escaping the fact that it's both highly entertaining and fairly addictive. Personally I think you'll soon tire of the one-player game, but in multi-player mode, Super Karts is a blast.

SUPER KARTS CD

VIRGIN/MANIC MEDIA

(0181) 960 2255

£TBA OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 38, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and 15Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Very easy to pick up yet very difficult to put down.
- Excellent in both two-player and multi-player modes.

...AND THE BAD

- Lacks any real long-term appeal.
- Doesn't offer anything particularly new and is far from original.

Overall

83%

review

Stardust Super Edition

Space Cadet Alex Simmons went way back in time for a bit of rock-'n'-roll action from Daze.

I won't bore you by harping on about how good the old classic games are, simply because I like processor-pushing beasts like BioForge too much. This is why it comes as a surprise that a game which has been around in one form or another almost since the dawn of time has only just made it onto the PC. In the age of monster games like Wing 3, is there really any space on your hard disk for a simple blast from the past like Asteroids?

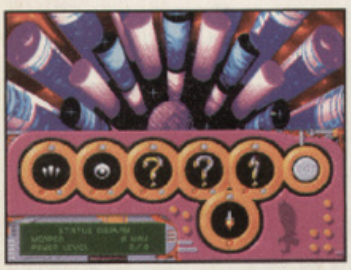
If the answer's 'Yes' then Stardust is the game for you. In all honesty this is, in essence, just Asteroids, coated with shiny whistles and bells to bring it up into the 90s. Long gone are the simplistic wire-frame graphics and the plink-plonk sound effects, replaced by booming explosions and colourful backdrops overlaid with tumbling lightsource-shaded meteors and alien invaders.

Stardust Super Edition is packed with 30 levels of rock-'n'-roll blasting stretched across five graphically-different warzones. Each battlefield is linked by a 3D warp tunnels, and there's a sub-game in which you have to fly your ship through the tunnels while avoiding the asteroids and indestructible mines that'll destroy you if you fly too close.

In keeping with tradition the action begins slowly, with just a couple of boulders rolling across the screen. When shot they split into smaller rocks that leave behind various gold bonus icons that do anything from restoring shields power, to awarding an extra life, to zapping everything on-screen with an almighty flash of light.

Beginning the game with a puny 3-way laser, this can soon be upgraded to something meatier by grabbing the power-ups left behind by exploding alien ships. There are six weapon boosts in all, from missiles to plasma bolts, each making the task of smashing boulders that bit easier.

A decent gun is essential for engaging the end-of-level guardians that must be destroyed before warping to the next stage. Assuming different appearances and attack strategies, the big bosses are tough beasties so keep your shield at the ready.



Grab the various weapon power-ups and they'll appear in your ship's inventory.

The warp sections make a pleasant change from the usual Asteroids thang, but they're far too long.

This is just one of the end-of-level guardians you'll encounter, and is pretty easy to beat with missiles.

The gold coins top-up shield and energy supplies which don't last long against those big rocks!

Stardust Super Edition features 30 levels of asteroids blastin' set in 5 different war zones. In Cyber-City huge alien crafts glide across the screen , laying a line of mines as they go.

Each level is set against a strict time limit, and failing to destroy all asteroids results in the arrival of a large shiny alien dropship that releases *loads* of tiny fighters which swarm around the screen. Chances of survival at this stage are slim, so keep a constant track of time to avoid certain death.

Created by the same team who programmed the Amiga game, the PC version looks virtually identical to the excellent original and features the same smooth-scrolling, colourful graphics and neat 3D warp tunnel section. The sound is also good, but unfortunately it's the gameplay that isn't *quite* up to scratch.

For starters I think the starship needs to be slightly more responsive than it already is, as death is often down to sluggish controls rather than a mistake made by the player. This fact is backed up further by the 3D sections which are ridiculously long (and therefore soon become tedious) and are pretty damn tricky, not because of the sheer difficulty but again because of the unresponsive controls.

Taking these faults into account, Stardust Super Edition is by no means the definitive Asteroids game, but it's still a reasonably-priced shoot-'em-up for those gamers looking for a decent blast from the past.

STARDUST SUPER EDITION

DAZE/BLOODHOUSE

(0171) 372 7435

£25.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 8Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- It makes a pleasant change from the Wing 3s and BioForges of this world.
- Visually it's colourful and vibrant — it looks pretty neat, actually.

...AND THE BAD

- The controls aren't *quite* right.
- At the end of the day, it's just Asteroids.

Overall

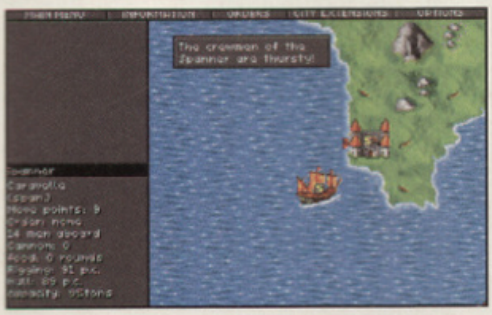
72%

Voyages Of Discovery

In 1492, Dean Evans sailed the ocean blue... and he was bored stiff.

I don't know whether you've noticed, but Black Legend seem to have a bit of a talent for releasing "look-a-like" games. Inordinate Desire, for example, looks uncannily like BlueByte's Battle Isle, Football Glory is a dead ringer for Sensible Soccer, and when Voyages Of Discovery was shoved across my desk, it came as no real surprise to see that this tale of exploration, trading and sea-borne shenanigans, looks and plays very much like a MicroProse game that ends with "-ization".

Unfortunately, while Colonization has gameplay literally oozing out of the packaging, VOD isn't quite so fortunate. Once you've picked a famous boating personality, say James Cook, you're given a Caravel, a bulging bag of doubloons and the freedom to wander around your home port. Here you can visit the local banker to get a loan, the pub where you can hire crewmembers, mercenaries and soldiers, the merchant who will buy and sell goods, and finally the shipyard where you can repair your ageing ship and outfit it with artillery.



After all this preparation, the aim of the game is a fiendishly simple one. Once you've hired a loyal crew and stocked up on provisions, you just set sail for the new world to make your fortune. Of course, it's not all plain sailing (ho-ho). You can choose to have up to four computer players competing against you, but without any interesting diversions — like technology advances or mini-quests — VOD's mindless exploration and endless trading is about as thrilling as a Jimi Hendrix guitar solo during a power cut.

The main problem with VOD is that it's totally and utterly boring. The point-'n'-click control interface is very fiddly and if you manage to play the game willingly for more than 10 minutes, you're a better, more patient gamesplayer than I. In VOD you just sail round and round in circles so take my advice, stick with MicroProse's Colonization, Civilization and Master Of Magic. Move along, there's nothing to see here. Move along...

VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY

BLACK LEGEND/IN-HOUSE

(01438) 840004

£24.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

20MHz 286, VGA, 5Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The watercolour-style pictures are very pretty.
- Er, did I mention the lovely watercolour pictures?
- Hey, about those pictures again...

...AND THE BAD

- You just sail around a lot, exploring and trading.
- The point-'n'-click interface is clumsy and very fiddly.
- It's very, very boring.

Overall

44%

Bureau 13CD

Dean Evans is weird so who better to review GameTek's mystery adventure?

Bureau 13 is a game that's frustratingly difficult to pigeonhole. On the one hand it seems like a fairly shallow adventure with a point-'n'-click interface and the usual dose of object manipulation and logic puzzles. But on the other, it could easily be seen as a pseudo RPG, a game that fuses Cyberpunk technologies with the eerie mystery of The X-Files.

In fact, as there isn't a game tie-in with The X-Files, Bureau 13 is as close as you're likely to get. Admittedly, it doesn't have the wild imagination of the TV series, and instead of Fox Mulder and Dana Sculley there's a bizarre collection of Cyber-assisted vampire agents to control, but the basic premise behind the game, i.e. that there's a hell of a lot of weirdness going on, is pretty much exactly the same.

Developed by Take 2 (the team who also programmed the Cyberpunk thriller, Hell), Bureau 13 is the name of a secret government organisation that has been set up to look into paranormal phenomena. As the game begins, the Bureau has been called in to investigate the attempted assassination of the Sheriff of Stratusburg. Usually this would be a job for the Feds, but as the prime suspect is apparently a former Bureau agent called J.P. Withers, your job is to capture him and destroy any evidence that connects him to the case.

In terms of gameplay, Bureau 13 plays very much like any traditional graphic adventure game, with the dark, mysterious plot slowly beginning to unravel as you pick up objects and discover new areas. But there's a small RPG element in the game too, because you can only recruit two agents from the six characters on offer. Each of the characters has very different abilities and, although some puzzles in the game can be overcome by any of the characters, some situations require specialised knowledge, so picking the right team is very important.

All in all, Bureau 13 is a nicely presented but fairly uninspiring game. It's very atmospheric, but beneath the pointless cutscenes and the clumsy point-'n'-click interface, it's really little more than a run-of-the-mill adventure game that refuses to tell you what the plot is. It's not a bad game, and I dare say that some of you will probably find it very enjoyable, but Bureau 13 did absolutely nothing for me at all. To be honest, it's very bland, and if you're in the market for a decent adventure try EA's Noctropolis or hang around for the stunning-looking Full Throttle. That's what I'd do anyway...

BUREAU 13

GAMETEK/TAKE 2

(01753) 553445

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 5Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- It's highly atmospheric and, because the plot is a mystery, you're never really sure what's going on.
- A choice of characters means that there's more than one way to solve a puzzle.
- It's a bit like the X-Files.

...AND THE BAD

- As a traditional graphic adventure, Bureau 13 is bland and quite dull.
- Sadly, it's not like the X-Files after all. Shame.

Overall

53%

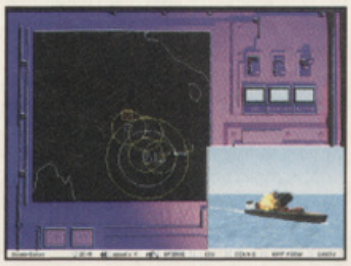
Dean Evans shoots triangles with his circles in Mindscape's naval warfare sim.

Ticonderoga CD

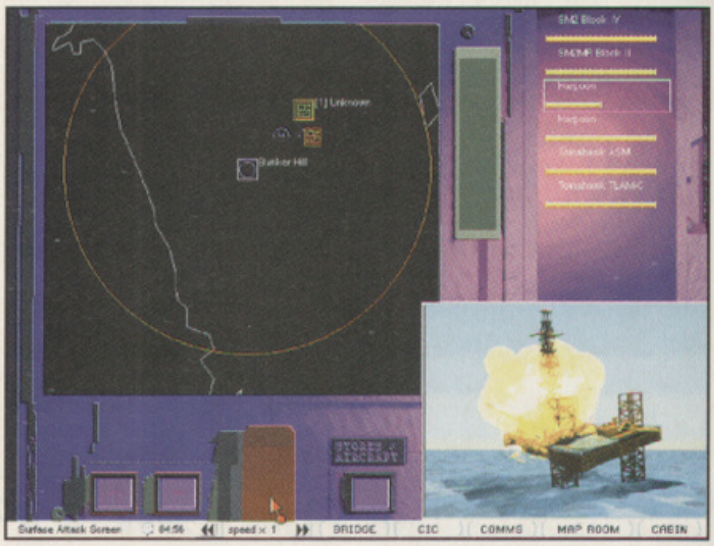
Now don't be fooled by the pretty pictures on these pages, because Ticonderoga is a map-based naval war simulation. There's no 3D shooting and you can't flip to an external view of your ship. This is a game that's all about maps. There are loads of them — maps for surface contacts, maps for submarine contacts, maps for the deck guns, etc. Despite the fact that Intelligent Games has added a bucketload of animations and pretty cutscenes, 95% of your playing time will be spent staring at a map, tracking the movements of circles, squares and dangerous little red triangles.

As you'd expect, the game puts you in command of a Ticonderoga Class cruiser and you can choose any one of the three different campaign theatres on offer: the North Atlantic, the Persian Gulf and the Sea Of Japan. Whichever one you choose, Ticonderoga is a very simple game to get into. Your ship is depicted as a series of separate locations, which you can walk between using the mouse pointer. Think of it as a mini adventure game — the control system is similar to Dragon Lore, i.e. it's a 3D flick-scrolling engine, but there's only five rooms to visit.

All of these locations are beautifully drawn, however, and your ship's maps and displays can be accessed by clicking on the relevant screens with the mouse cursor. Unfortunately, while being able to wander between the locations that make up your ship is a nice idea, in the long run it's purely a cosmetic one-off. Any serious Ticonderoga player will soon tire of the pretty graphics and start using the short-cut keys to leap instantly from map to map. There is a strategy game beneath the graphics you know...



(Above) Some situations allow you to talk the imminent encounter through with your First Officer.



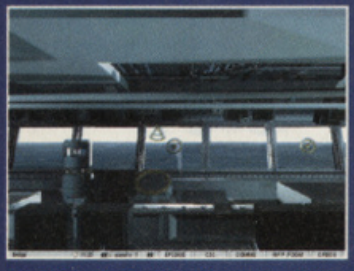
On the Surface Attack screen you can designate targets, choose what sort of missile you want to fire at them and then let 'em loose by pushing the big red button. One hit with a Tomahawk and the rig is history.

But Intelligent Games hasn't been content with a pretty ship. In addition to the rendered graphics, the programmers have also added numerous role-playing episodes to try and make your captain's role a bit more realistic. For example, in the tutorial conflict set in the Persian Gulf, your first mission is to waste three Iranian oil rigs. Before the combat starts, you are called to the Comms room where the Number One suggests you warn the oil rigs so that the civilians can evacuate them before the attack.

At the same time, your radio officer suggests that sending a warning to the rigs would probably alert Iranian naval forces to your presence, and as the war is still in its early stages you shouldn't risk a full-blown encounter. So you have three choices, either to: (a) totally ignore the advice of your First Officer and fire on the rigs without warning; (b) radio a warning to warn the oil workers; or (c) do nothing for the moment, stand off and see what happens.

As the captain, the responsibility falls on your shoulders to pick an answer and play out the mission. Of course, the right answer here is to warn

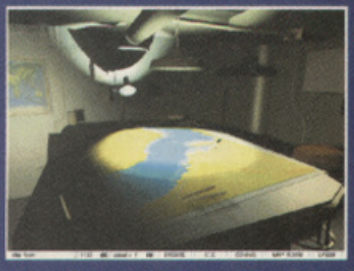
Action Stations!



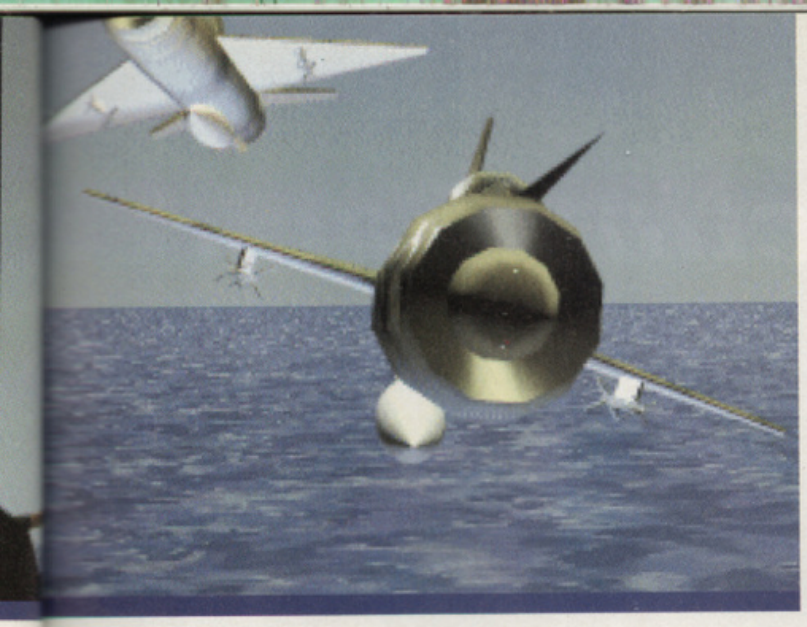
The Bridge... It's not only a nice view, but warship Captains can stand on it and look very tense.

The CIC... This is the tactical bit of the ship, where you can access all those bland, tactical displays.

The Comms Room... Those role-playing episodes are acted out here in the red-tinted gloom...



The Map Room... It's a big room, with maps in it. Er, that's all it's used for really.



A Ticonder-What?

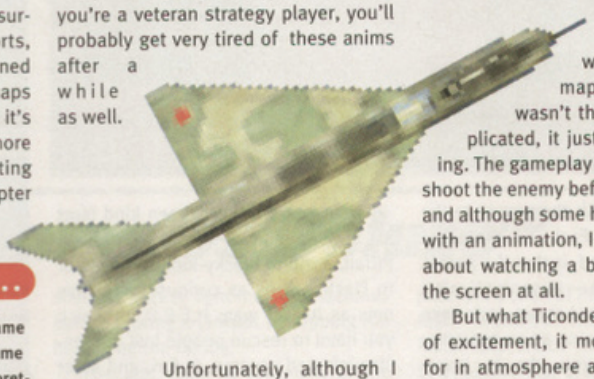
The Ticonderoga Class is one of the most important and powerful classes of ship in the US Navy. It was designed to defend carrier battlegroups against saturation missile attacks, and since anti-ship missiles can be launched by aircraft, ships and even submarines, the Ticonderoga can reliably detect threats in all three environments before they pose a threat to the battlegroup.

A typical Ticonderoga cruiser carries an awesome array of weapons including, Harpoon anti-ship missiles, standard surface-to-air missiles, anti-submarine rockets (ASROC), torpedoes and two multi-purpose deck guns. Newer models of the ship can also carry the Tomahawk Cruise missile — the TASM for ship-to-ship attacks and the TLSM for land attacks. In addition, ships can also be equipped with two LAMPS III helicopters.

the rigs and deal with any Iranian naval threat that appears. Why? Well, look at it this way. You're a kind person and, besides, you've got a state-of-the-art battle cruiser and the Iranians have got a couple of dinghies with machine guns. It's not really much of a match-up.

Although all I've talked about so far is the graphics and the role-playing, there is a complex strategy game in Ticonderoga as well. And it's not a bad one. All of your information — i.e. surface contacts, weather reports, weapons stores, etc — can be gleaned from the various bland-looking maps and, although it's daunting at first, it's quite simple to coordinate two or more ships, identifying targets, protecting friendly vessels, sending out helicopter strikes, and so on.

Again, one of the nicer things about Ticonderoga is the way that Intelligent Games has used rendered animations to illustrate key moments in the action. For example, when you fire a Tomahawk you're treated to a ten-second clip of the missile blasting from its launcher, and when the missile hits its target (*if* it hits), you get another small animation showing the enemy ship exploding. As I said, these are all very nice, but if you're a veteran strategy player, you'll probably get very tired of these anims after a while as well.



Unfortunately, although I stuck at it, I found Ticonderoga monumentally dull and, if by adding pretty pictures, Intelligent were hoping to attract more mainstream gamesplayers, I'd have to say that it has failed completely. To be honest, I've had more fun doing the washing up, and while the actual map-based combat wasn't that difficult or complicated, it just wasn't very exciting. The gameplay just boiled down to shoot the enemy before they shoot you, and although some hits were illustrated with an animation, I got no satisfaction about watching a blip disappear from the screen at all.

But what Ticonderoga lacks in terms of excitement, it more than makes up for in atmosphere and the sheer number of maps. Harpoon 2 is still the clear leader in the bland map and blip category, but Ticonderoga is a neat game. I'm not sure how difficult it will be in the long-term, especially to a seasoned Harpoonist, but with three individual campaigns, each with their own plot narrative, if you're a strategy nut then Ticonderoga might just be worth taking a peek at. The melancholy soundtrack will probably get on your nerves, but despite my lack of enthusiasm for the game, I'm convinced that Ticonderoga is still a decent strategy game. If you like that sort of thing...

It's a bit like...

...Harpoon 2. If Ticonderoga is a game of draughts then Harpoon 2 is a game of chess. Don't expect to find any pretty cutscenes or flashy rendered animations here, though, because this is pure, naval strategy. It doesn't look very pretty but it's totally absorbing. Never liked that sort of thing myself...

The Captain's Cabin... Forget about your troubles, sit back, relax and drink lots of tea.

Ticonderoga features three very different campaigns, each of which has its own unique narrative. If you're a new player, the Persian Gulf scenario features a tutorial to lead you into the game gently.

TICONDEROGA CD

MINDSCAPE/INTELLIGENT GAMES

(01444) 246333

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, SVGA, 8Mb RAM and 15Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Okay, so it's not in Harpoon 2's league, but Ticonderoga is still a good strategy game.
- The animations and the role-play jazz things up nicely.

...AND THE BAD

- It's monumentally dull.
- The graphics are purely cosmetic.
- The soundtrack really gets on your nerves after a while.

Overall

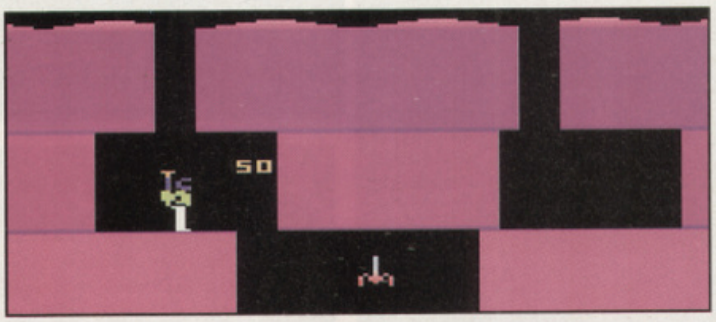
79%

review

Atari 2600 Action Pack CD

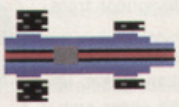
David Upchurch wanders down memory lane with Activision's Atari VCS emulator — and look, there are tears in his eyes...

(Above) Pitfall has a place in history as one of the first gaming classics — it's still entertaining even now.
(Below) H.E.R.O. is a tense rescue mission against the clock set in a series of bright, blocky caverns.

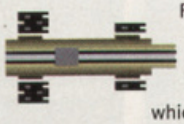


We first met in 1981, back in the days when every arcade throbbed to the sound of PacMen eating tiny yellow dots. She was the first games machine I ever owned, and together we explored the exotic mysteries and the primitive passions of computer gaming. But things grew cold between us, and inevitably we drifted apart. I started hanging around with a ZX Spectrum and I never saw her again...

But they say that you never forget your first love, which is why that old Atari VCS console always held a special place in my heart. I looked back on our relationship with fondess, and a melancholy smile used to play across my face as I remembered the good times — and a few of the bad times too.

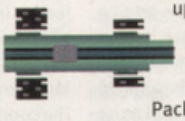


Sadly, however, my bitter-sweet memories have been shattered by the unwelcome arrival of Activision's Atari 2600 Action Pack. It's essentially a Windows-based Atari VCS emulator (the 2600 is what the Yanks used to call the VCS), which comes bundled with a total of fifteen ancient Activision VCS games. And when I say 'ancient' I mean 'crumbly old OAPs of the software industry' ancient — there's not one game on offer here that's less than a decade old.



Now just because a game's no spring chicken, that doesn't necessarily make it bad. As regular readers will know, all of us at PC GAMES are nostalgia nuts, and will happily load up our Spectrum and Commodore 64 emulators to have a bash at Knight Lore or Boulderdash. But the enduring appeal of such mouldy-oldies is that they were sophisticated games that had the misfortune to be running on unsophisticated machines.

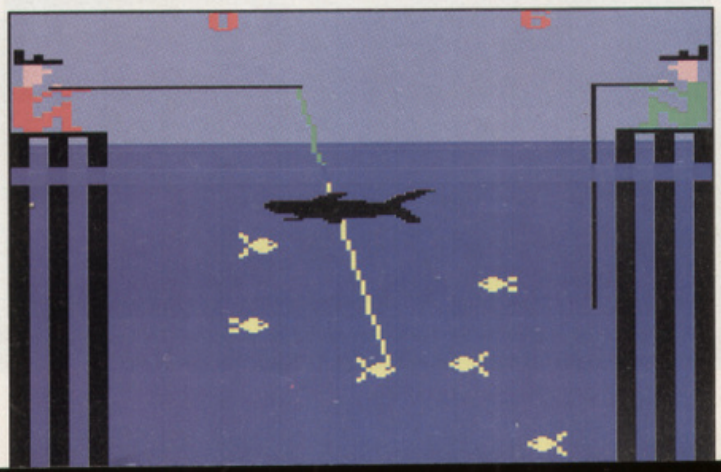
The problem with the games in the Atari 2600 Action Pack, on the other hand, is that the games are unsophisticated too. I mean, let's take Boxing as an example; all you do is move around the ring and tap 'punch' when your opponent is in range. There's no subtlety or complexity to the gameplay — you can't block or duck, for instance.



Most of the rest of the pack is just as mind-numbingly simplistic. How about Freeway, a Frogger-style game in which you can't even move left and right? Or Fishing Derby, where you attempt to reel in your catch without it getting eaten by the shark prowling the top of the lake? Or Kaboom!, in which you have to catch bombs?

Time has, however, been kind (sort of) to a handful of the titles on offer: Pitfall, a sort of blocky-looking ancestor to Flashback, is as curiously addictive now as it ever was; H.E.R.O, in which you have to rescue people lost in monster-infested caverns, is fun; and River Raid, a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up, still entertains.

But amusing as these three games are, they hardly class the Atari 2600 Action Pack as a 'must buy'. From a 'History Of Video Games' point-of-view it's nice that this CD exists, especially as it includes on-line background notes about each game, often featuring lengthy interviews with the original programmer or designer. But if it's simply some cracking Windows games you're after, you'd be better off looking elsewhere.



River Raid may not have the graphic 'oomph!' of modern blasts, but it's fun none-the-less.

ATARI 2600 ACTIONPACK CD

ACTIVISION/IN-HOUSE

(0181) 742 9400

£24.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 5Mb of hard disk space, Windows 3.1 and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

All Windows-compatible soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The nostalgia rating is completely off the scale.

...AND THE BAD

- A few exceptions aside, most of the games have dated *very* badly.
- May spoil many readers' fond, rose-tinted memories.

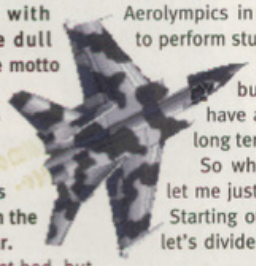
Overall

37%

Jetstrike CD

Grandslam's substandard Amiga conversion proves too much for Alex Simmons.

Oh dear. Grandslam has really plummeted into the gutter this time. Obviously not content with bundling Jetstrike inside dull packaging adorned with the motto 'Dagga Dagga et Blastium' (oh dear), Grandslam has committed PC gamers to a fate worse than death by actually unleashing this Shareware-esque shooter on the unsuspecting public. Oh dear.

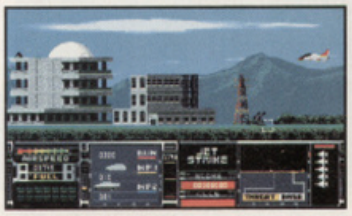


Actually Jetstrike isn't *that* bad, but it's a long way from the more spectacular blasters we've come to expect on PC. It's an old Amiga game that hasn't translated particularly well, looking horribly archaic and resembling something you could download from a bulletin board for the price of a phone call. Oh dear again.

The game features a wide selection of missions, totalling some 200 combat and training sorties which can be flown in 60 different jet fighters and helicopters. Controlling the aircraft is a simple task, using the cursor keys to hug the game's basic scenery in search of your primary target. Once your objective has been destroyed, you return to base and land on the airstrip. That's about it — there are no complex missions to undertake and nothing especially enthralling to grab your attention. Oh dear once again.

Jetstrike does have a multi-player Aerolympics in which competitors try to perform stunts and fly along tricky courses to earn points, but this really doesn't have anything to offer in the long term.

So what does it score? Well let me just consult my calculator. Starting off with a perfect 100%, let's divide that by the number of times I wrote 'Oh dear' in this review — that's 5, giving us a total of 20%. Add to this the time this game will actually keep you amused for — about 15 minutes, I'd say — and you have the final score of 35%. Yup, that's just about right.



(Above) Let's all play 'Spot The Jet Fighter'!
(Below) Fun for all at the Aerolympics!

JETSTRIKE CD

GRANDSLAM/RASPUTIN

(0181) 680 7044

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2.5Mb RAM, 6Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The game is packed with loads of planes and missions...

...AND THE BAD

- But you won't want to play any of them, and the aircraft are so small it hardly makes a difference.
- A Shareware-quality game at an un-Shareware price.

Overall

35%

Pinball Fantasies Deluxe CD

Alex Simmons steps up for another go on 21st Century's pinball simulation.

Previous masters of the noble art of simulating pinball, 21st Century Entertainment, have counter-attacked the release of Codemaster's awesome Psycho Pinball with an enhanced CD-based version of their award-winning Pinball Fantasies.

This 'Deluxe' version of the game packages the first four tables — Party Land, Speed Devils, Billion Dollar Gameshow, and Stones-'n'-Bones — with four new ones, each packed with a load of new features including the much-needed multi-ball.

The first table, titled Tarantula, is themed around the old B-movie horror flicks, and the ball must be flipped along ramps and down gulleys to the avoid gaping maws of the drooling arachnid and to notch up a ball-breaking high score.

Jailbreak is a cops-'n'-robbers table with loads of ramps and flippers, and is bloody difficult compared to the easier casino-style table, Jackpot, in which you shoot targets to light the fruit machines before scoring a jackpot by flipping the ball along the ramps.

The last table is Kick Off, a Eric Cantona-inspired pinny based around the Kung-Fu kicking world of football. Striking the targets scores goals for the home side, but don't let the ball fly down between your flippers and into the back of your net.

While all these tables are cosmetically very nice, they still aren't up to the pixel-perfection of Psycho Pinball's fantastic foursome. The Codies' game is faster and much more addictive too, and has a variety of excellent dot-matrix sub-games which Pinball Fantasies Deluxe sadly lacks.

When all is said and done, although Pinball Fantasies Deluxe is still a neat pinball simulation, it's not quite as playable, addictive or exciting as the all-ruling Psycho Pinball. Better luck next time, eh?

PINBALL FANTASIES DELUXE CD

21ST CENTURY/SPIDERSOFT

(01235) 851533

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 640k and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Gravis UltraSound and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- There are plenty of tables to keep pinball wizards amused.
- The pumping CD-quality stereo soundtrack is excellent.

...AND THE BAD

- It doesn't have the multitude of features or the sheer excitement of the superior Psycho Pinball.
- For some reason, the physics of the ball aren't *quite* right.

Overall

79%

NBA Live '95 CD

Dean Evans gets ready to Jam with the best-looking basketball game on the PC.

EA's Sports brand has always had a reputation for top-quality sports sims. And, after the delights of NHL Hockey and FIFA Soccer, NBA Live '95 has just slam-dunked its way to a permanent place on my hard disk. In fact, unless Electronic Arts brings out its FIFA-style Rugby game on the PC, I'll have to say that NBA Live '95 is probably the best Sports title that I've played so far.

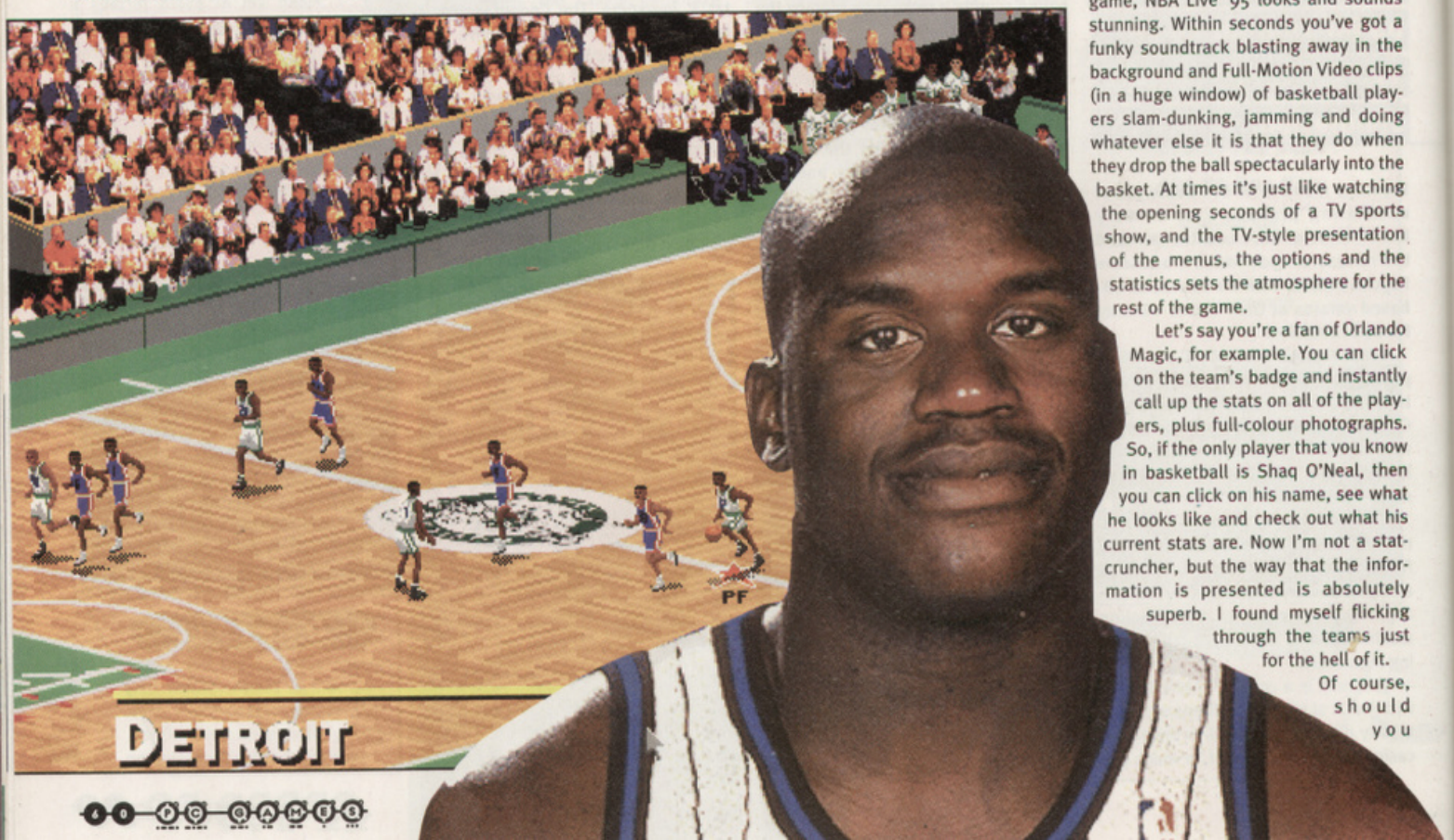
Now I don't know much about basketball. So don't ask me how many players are allowed on the court, because I've absolutely no idea. To be honest, I've always thought that it was a boring game and so my knowledge of the sport is severely limited. But, having spent a couple of hours on a NBA Jam coin-op in my local arcade, I've discovered that running up and down a wooden court chucking a ball through a hoop is actually much more fun than it looks. Boom-shakalaka... and all that.

Sadly, while NBA Live '95 doesn't capture all the arcade, hoop-flaming excitement of NBA JAM, it's still a brilliant game in its own right. In fact, you can play it as either a fully-fledged simulation or as an NBA Jam-style arcade game, but before I start waffling on about the options and the in-game graphics, I've just got to say something about the game's presentation.

From the moment you load up the game, NBA Live '95 looks and sounds stunning. Within seconds you've got a funky soundtrack blasting away in the background and Full-Motion Video clips (in a huge window) of basketball players slam-dunking, jamming and doing whatever else it is that they do when they drop the ball spectacularly into the basket. At times it's just like watching the opening seconds of a TV sports show, and the TV-style presentation of the menus, the options and the statistics sets the atmosphere for the rest of the game.

Let's say you're a fan of Orlando Magic, for example. You can click on the team's badge and instantly call up the stats on all of the players, plus full-colour photographs. So, if the only player that you know in basketball is Shaq O'Neal, then you can click on his name, see what he looks like and check out what his current stats are. Now I'm not a stat-cruncher, but the way that the information is presented is absolutely superb. I found myself flicking through the teams just for the hell of it.

Of course, should you



NBA '95 can either be played in the close-up VGA mode or in SVGA mode (below) where the graphics are better but you can't see what's going on. (Bottom right) Shaq O'Neal of the Orlando Magic.

All of the games in NBA Live '95 have the look and feel of games on TV. It's still tight here between Utah and Orlando but the tide may be about to turn...

Like NBA Jam in the arcades, the closer your players get to the basket, the more likely it gets that if they shoot they'll get a spectacular score. Number 59 rises above the crowd and..... slam! 2 points!

tire of scanning the exhaustive NBA database, there's a basketball game squashed onto the CD as well. You can choose to play a one-off exhibition match or to take part in the season with all the joys of player trades, injuries, etc. In an exhibition match, you simply pick two teams and then customise the options to suit your playing style.

For example, if you're an NBA Jam fan the game is far better in bog-standard arcade mode, while if you want to makes things a little more realistic you can switch on goal tending, travelling, player fatigue and all manner of other basketball penalties that I'm totally unaware of.

Before the game begins, NBA Live '95 serves up some more of that TV-style presentation, this time complete with some of the best, most seamless digitised speech that I've heard. Then, the two teams' stats are compared and finally you can view the beautiful mugshots of the players in the starting line-ups.

It's a shame that after all this glitzy razzmatazz, the actual in-game graphics come as something of a disappointment. They're not bad — far from it — it's just that compared to the high-resolution, SVGA delights of the pre-match build-up, with its FMV clips and full colour photos, the somewhat blocky VGA players are almost a let-down.

The game itself is played on an isometric 3D pitch, rather like FIFA Soccer, and the controls are very basic, restricted to up, down, left, right and the two fire buttons on your joystick. Unlike NBA Jam, there are no complicated joystick moves. The first fire button passes the ball to the nearest player, while the second shoots. Any flashy jams or dunks are animated randomly by the computer depending on how far away your player is from the basket.

As in FIFA Soccer, the attention to detail during any game is fabulous. The crowd cheer loudly when you score and fall quieter when your opponents do, you can hear sneakers squeak on the wooden floor and the players grunt and groan when they're unceremoniously shoved off of the ball. The animation is also excellent and your players can perform spectacular jams and slam-dunks with all the twists, turns and celebratory dances that the NBA Jam coin-op has to offer.

NBA Live '95 will probably go down a storm in the United States, and although it might not be very popular over here, this is a game that has really impressed me. In terms of presentation, it's practically perfect but, to be honest, I don't know whether there is enough variety and longevity in the gameplay to satisfy the casual basketball player. But as you can customise NBA Live as you please, you can make your games as realistic or as easy as you want.

As I've said, this is my only real gripe. It's a shame that the graphics aren't a bit more high-res, but once I've finished fighting my way through Dark Forces (yes, I'm still going), I'll probably return to NBA Live just to see whether I can avenge my 4th quarter defeat by the New York Knicks. And as you can't get NBA Jam on the PC, NBA Live '95 is, so far, as good as basketball gets. Boom shakalaka... let's shoot some hoops.

NBA LIVE '95 CD

ELECTRONIC ARTS/IN-HOUSE

(01753) 549442

£TBA OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

33MHz 486, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 2Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Sound Blaster, Roland and Ad Lib soundcards.

It's a bit like...

...FIFA Soccer. Sorry, I can't think of any decent basketball games on the PC, apart from an old Michael Jordan game and that wasn't exactly very good. Besides, FIFA Soccer uses a similar isometric 3D pitch and it's our national sport. So if you haven't tried it, give it a go...

Things are getting desperate so the Knicks start going for the three-pointers to claw the score back. It's a risky strategy and one that, if you stayed to watch, would end in complete disaster.

THE GOOD...

- The TV-style presentation is absolutely stunning.
- The soundtrack is excellent.
- There's a wealth of stats for all you keen followers of the game.
- Oh, and the actual game itself isn't bad either.

...AND THE BAD

- The in-game graphics could have been a little better.
- Not as much fun as NBA Jam.

Overall

89%

A fan of the original FASA board game, Alex Simmons checks out SSI's computer adaptation of Renegade.

Renegade

Battle For Jacob's Star CD

Now this is a turn up for the book. As past masters of war games and all things strategic, SSI has ventured into a radically new genre (for them, at least) with a game that brings it into direct competition with the big boys like Wing Commander 3 and TIE Fighter.

Always keen to steer clear of action games, perhaps Renegade: Battle for Jacob's Star marks a new era for SSI, because rather than creating another strategy game or an RPG, it has unleashed an Super VGA space combat simulator, and very good it is too.

Based on the hugely-popular board and role-playing games from FASA (they're popular in America, anyway), the galaxy in which Renegade is set bears a strong resemblance to the Star Wars universe, in that the Renegade Legionnaires are fighting against the all encompassing Terran Overlord Government, otherwise known as TOG. Sounds uncannily like the Rebel Alliance/Empire conflict, eh?

Cast as some hotshot pilot whose full potential has yet to be recognised (hmm, isn't that *always* the case?), you start life at the very bottom...well, not at the *very* bottom, that would be a intergalactic bog cleaner or something...no, you're a rookie pilot (or a Mitch as they're known) looking to impress your Commanding Officer with fancy flying and kills in combat.

This is a far from simple task (impressing your CO that is, not the killing bit) because he's the usual loud-mouthed, bad-ass mutha who doesn't like 'faggot' rookies like you. In fact, he takes great pleasure in ordering insignificant maggots like you around (which reminds me, the speech throughout is excellent, although some of the dialogue is a bit cliched), and it's here that you notice that the characters in Renegade suffer from that all-too-common PC condition, 'Hyperactive mouth-muscles'. Yep, Renegade is plagued by naff lip-synching — a minor problem you may think, but if a job's worth doing, surely it's worth doing well?

Anyway, progress through the game is made by successfully flying the usual selection of combat missions — all-out attacks, recon missions and escort runs, that sort of thing. Yes, I know it's been done before in Wing Commander 3 and TIE Fighter, but don't let that put you off.

After you've reported for duty and you've chosen your character portrait and call-sign, you get the chance to fly a full-blown career or to enter Holo-Space. H-Space is essentially a training simulator that allows trainee pilots to familiarise themselves with the cockpit layouts of six Renegade spacecraft while battling against wave after wave of incoming TOG interceptors. If you want a few hectic minutes of mindless blasting fun, this is exactly what you're looking for.

If you seek a more structured mission-based game, the career option offers just that. Automatically assigned a ship and a fellow wingman, your first journey into deep space is a relatively uneventful affair. That is until a few minutes into the mission where your short-range scanner picks up two hostile targets — a pair of inbound Lancea-class TOG fighters patrolling the Terran border.

When ordered to attack immediately by your wingman (who's there to constantly update you on your progress and very occasionally to hurl sarcastic insults at you via the ship's com-link), the targeting computer can be programmed to acquire a lock on the nearest enemy ship. This brings up a target ID that details their current status and also enables missiles to get a positive lock.

Each ship is equipped with a variety of weapons including the usual selection of laser blasters, as well as the meatier Electron Particle Cannons and Mass Driver Cannons. A choice of three one-shot rockets are also available and while all of these are homing fire-and-forget missiles, some are more effective than others.

Tracking the enemy is made easier by the handy padlock view, while switching to the full-screen cockpit mode (which dispenses with most of

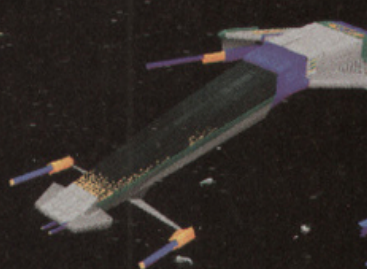
Pick A Craft, *Any Craft*

Guardian

A medium fighter, the Guardian is well armoured and is therefore slow, making it more suitable for engaging the less manoeuvrable TOG ships.

Space Gull

Graceful in flight, the Space Gull medium fighter carries a selection of lasers, Mass Driver cannons and missiles, and is a good all-round interceptor.



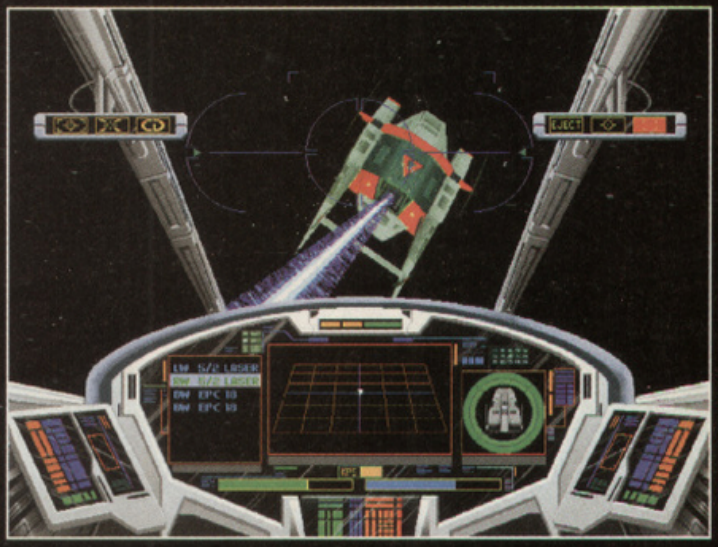
Fluttering Petal

Don't let its name fool you, because this is the heaviest fighter of the Renegade fleet and is equipped with no less than 10 weapons!

Avenger

Although this bulky Heavy fighter doesn't have the facilities to carry missiles, it more than makes up for their absence with five awesome cannons.

Scratch one TOG scumbag! The Renegade Fluttering Petal is an awesome ship, kitted out with a massive ten weapon systems, and is more than a match for the puny TOG interceptors.



Lock onto the nearest enemy target and it appears on the close-range scanner as a white blip. Damage status is detailed on the right control panel and weapon stores are found on the left.

the control panels and displays) increases your chances of keeping the enemy in your gun-sights.

As is the 'norm' for virtually every space combat sim, the range of camera angles is extensive, and Renegade boasts a choice of three interior cockpit views as well as a load of external shots which, although they look very impressive, serve no real purpose in the game whatsoever.

It's not just the external views that look good either, because visually Renegade looks pretty damn smart all over. The detailed Super VGA graphics are impressive and, much to my surprise, move quite smoothly even on a 33MHz 486DX. The graphics do tend to glitch occasionally and bits of the ship often disappear, but this isn't a regular occurrence and it usually only affects the exterior camera angles.

The animated cutscenes are also fairly good (apart from the lip-synching, of course). Adopting an Anime-style approach, while they're not as impressive as the gratuitous FMV sequences of Wing Commander 3, they look good and explain the changes in the plot clearly and often in an amusing manner.

Because the game runs smoothly on even the minimum spec machine, the game glides rather than rockets along. Imagine a jet fighter speeding at over Mach 3 and a more elegant prop-driven plane cruising through the clouds — this is essentially the difference between TIE Fighter and Renegade, as SSI's creation soars rather than sprints.

That's not to say Renegade isn't action-packed. It's jammed with an assortment of missions that you can sink your teeth into, and if you tire of these (which is doubtful) there's always the H-space simulator to satisfy your lust for blood.

However, while Renegade has it's fair share of positive merits, it also has a few negative features too. Take the mission loading times for example, which often last about two minutes. Now this might not sound long, but when you're gagging to nuke the slimy TOG maggots, it seems like an eternity.

The sound, or at least the music, is pretty annoying too, made up of assorted 2 Unlimited-style rave tracks. Initially they're bearable but after hearing the same damn track for the umpteenth time it begins to grate *just* a little bit. To be fair though the sound effects are excellent, the explosions sound very, um, 'bangy' while the lasers blasts are quite, er, 'lasery'.

All in all, Renegade has little to offer over the likes of Wing 3 and TIE Fighter. It's well presented nevertheless, and there's a sizeable chunk of gameplay to get stuck into too. But I can't help thinking Renegade is just a clone of two superior games — a good clone, but one which is sadly overshadowed by the excellence of Origin and LucasArts.

Each ship is equipped with deflector shields which flash each time a blast is absorbed.

Renegade is filled with external views that look good but have very little affect on the gameplay.

Cheetah

The Cheetah is a light fighter and is the fastest ship in the Renegade line-up. It's equipped with four weapons and one missile.

Penetrator

A name more commonly used for, er, 'recreational' aids, the Penetrator is heavily armed and armoured and is one of the Renegade's most formidable craft.

RENEGADE: BATTLE FOR JACOB'S STAR CD

MINDSCAPE/SSI

(01444) 246333

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, 4Mb RAM, 1Mb SVGA, CD-ROM drive, Mouse and 15Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Canvas, Wave Blaster, Gravis and Sound Blaster soundcards.

It's a bit like...

...Wing Commander 3, the awesome interactive movie from Origin starring Luke Skywalker himself, Mark Hamill. By far the most expensive game ever made (reputedly costing around $4 million!), it's an extravagant production which follows the career of Colonel Christopher Blair. Featuring an intriguing plot, lavish graphics and superb FMV, Wing 3 really is in a league of its own.

THE GOOD...

- The SVGA graphics are very clear and well defined.
- There are load of missions to embark upon, as well as the ultra-frantic, all-action H-space simulator.
- Well-presented, Renegade is also good fun to play.

...AND THE BAD

- Original? I don't think so.
- It's not as fast-'n'-furious as TIE Fighter

Overall

83%

Flight Of The Amazon Queen CD

What are you going to do this weekend? Dean Evans plans to infiltrate a Lederhosen factory in the Amazon Jungle.

(Above) Dressed in a gypsy-style dress, Joe tries to think of a way to get rid of Anderson's henchmen. Let's see... a can of oil and a pursuing car... hmmm. (Below) In one of the simpler puzzles Joe needs to get an orchid surrounded by wasps, so he sucks 'em up with his handy battery-powered hoover.

(Below) The various locations in the Amazon jungle can be reached via this huge pinnacle of rock... (Below right) When things go wrong, they go really wrong. Joe's finally found a lost tribe of Amazon women and he's been locked in a cell with a bunch of blokes. Typical.

If you don't know already, or your memory has been dulled during the last eight months and you've completely forgotten, Flight Of The Amazon Queen is a graphic adventure that looks and plays a lot like Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis. Like most adventures, FOTAQ is a typical point-'n'-click game but, like Monkey Island, Day Of The Tentacle and Discworld, it has a quirky, B-Movie storyline that involves a plane crash, a mad scientist, a lost tribe of Amazon women and a secret genetics laboratory hidden in a Lederhosen factory.

Set in 1949, Flight Of The Amazon Queen brings back memories of TV shows like Tales Of The Golden Monkey and Bring 'Em Back Alive. Remember them? In these shows,the hero (usually an American ex-pilot) is continually down on his luck. His idea of saving money is not to pay for his own drinks, he's almost handsome and, together with his best friend (usually a fat mechanic) and a feisty young woman who says that she hates him but really loves him deep down, they accidentally find knee-trembling danger and excitement for 50 minutes each week.

Flight Of The Amazon Queen is a lot like this. It has the pilot, it has the mechanic and it even has a young woman who seems to hate the hero, but will no doubt end up snogging him in the finale. The hero in FOTAQ is one Joe King, a pilot who's just about to fly the movie star Faye Russell into the heart of the Amazon jungle for a photo shoot. After a short delay, which involves a brief period of detention, a knotted sheet and a pair of comedy breasts, he finally powers his ageing aircraft into the sky. But the journey is cut short as his plane is struck by a bolt of lightning and crashes spectacularly into a swamp.

In the jungle, you take control of Joe and, with nothing but a damp comic, a knife, a lighter and some old beef jerky to help you, you've got to find a way out of the jungle, say lots of witty one-liners, indulge in a few sight gags and stop an evil scientist from taking over the world. There are no real surprises here, it's just your typical object-based, point-'n'-click quest, but like Monkey Island and Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis, FOTAQ is a fun game to play and there's more than enough of a challenge here to keep you going for weeks.

In fact, considering the bulk of the game was programmed by just two people, it's remarkably well done. As you can see, FOTAQ has a simple control system with all the usual GET, TALK and LOOK icons arranged in a bar at the bottom of the screen. Admittedly, it's not very flashy — you can't switch off the menu bar, and there are none of these new-fangled 'smart' icons either — but the system is very intuitive and easy to get to grips with. For example, a neat feature of the game is the way that if you examine an object and discover new objects inside it, the new objects will automatically be added to your inventory, saving you the bother of picking them up.

If you're a veteran of the Monkey Island and the Indiana Jones games, then this humourous graphic adventure will feel very familiar. It's hard to explain but FOTAQ has a very 'old' feel to it. The programmers, Steve Stamatiades and John Passfield, admitted last year that they wanted to make an adventure game that could rival the LucasArts classics, and with Flight Of

(Above) The Amazon Queen isn't an old crone who lives in the jungle, it's the name of Joe's plane...
(Left) The glamourous Faye Russell in a suitably gratuitous and totally spontaneous pose.

(Above left) Joe confronts a gorilla who's dressed in one of Mr Blobby's cast-offs.
(Above) Pale visage, bony hands, a black cape and a scythe. So is he Death or a Gothic gardener??

The Amazon Queen, they have succeeded in doing exactly that.

But if there is a problem with the game it's this. With Full Throttle on the horizon, and compared to Day Of The Tentacle and Sam & Max, Flight Of The Amazon Queen is already beginning to show its age. I don't want to take anything away from the game's original storyline or the gags (and some of them are *very* funny), but FOTAQ just doesn't look very impressive. The chunky VGA graphics aren't exactly state-of-the-art, the cutscenes are a bit clumsy and while the music is nice and the speech is adequate, this isn't a game that gets anywhere near blowing your socks off.

But don't get me wrong — I don't think that FOTAQ is a bad game. It's fun, witty and while the puzzles aren't easy, there are enough blatant hints dotted around so that you're never going to be stuck for very long. It's also quite a big game, and while the storyline is corny and cliched, with its numerous animated cutscenes, it rolls a long at a fairly good pace. There's even going to be a disk version later on in the year, so if you haven't got a CD-ROM drive you're not going to miss out on the six-foot-tall pgymies, the comedy gorilla and the Amazon shower room.

Unfortunately, FOTAQ just washed over me. The graphics are nice. The sound is nice. The animation is nice. All in all, Flight Of The Amazon Queen is very, er, well, it's very nice — it just doesn't have anything that makes it stand out from the graphic adventure crowd. Compared to the likes of Full Throttle and Discworld, Flight Of The Amazon Queen is subdued and rather plain-looking. It has the look and feel of a game that should have appeared two years ago and, without top-class visuals and stunningly-produced dialogue, I don't think that it's going to take the market by storm.

(Above) Trader Bob's is the Amazonian equivalent of the 7-11 convenience store. Trader Bob himself is a large Australian fellow who has a fondness for beef jerky. Don't forget to check out his assistant. Wow.

It's a bit like...

...Simon The Sorcerer. Like FOTAQ, Simon is an adventure game stuffed full of sight gags, puns, cliches and groan-inducing one-liners. With beautiful high-res graphics and a distinctly British slant to the humour, this was one of the big hits of 1994. Watch out for the imaginatively-titled Simon The Sorcerer 2 in a couple of months.

Like Discworld and Simon The Sorcerer, Flight Of The Amazon Queen is a vehicle for cliches, puns, double entendres, word play and B-Movie film references. For example, look at the registration no. on the plane...

FLIGHT OF THE AMAZON QUEEN CD

WARNER INTERACTIVE/RENEGADE

(0171) 391 4300

£TBA OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 1Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Roland and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Funny and challenging.
- Easy to get into and a doddle to use.

...AND THE BAD

- Not great, not awful, just somewhere in-between.
- It feels very dated compared to Day Of The Tentacle and especially the forthcoming Full Throttle.
- The speech is a bit lifeless.

Overall

80%

review

Football Glory

Dean Evans gets banned from the touchline in Black Legend's Sensible Soccer clone.

At first glance, Football Glory looks exactly like Sensible Soccer. In fact, the resemblance is amazing — the pitch looks the same, the goals are mysteriously similar and the tiny player sprites are almost identical. If I didn't know better, Sensible Soccer and Football Glory could be two peas from the same pod — at a distance it's very difficult to tell the two apart. It's only when you sit down and actually play the Black Legend game that you realise that, beneath the familiar visuals, it's not even half the game that Sensi is.

But although Football Glory is the most unashamedly blatant Sensi clone that I've ever seen, it still doesn't manage to capture the fluid playability and the frantic excitement of Sensible Soccer. Someone at developers Croteam probably thought that if you took Sensi and added some extra features (and I'll get to these in a minute), then you'd end up with the ultimate football game. Sadly, this hasn't turned out to be the case.

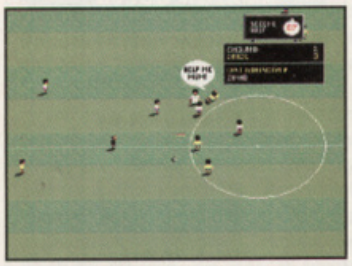
And to be honest, I can't quite put my finger on the exact reason why. Perhaps it's because, if you're used to playing Sensible Software's soccer game, the 'feel' of Football Glory (i.e. the way the players move, pass and shoot) is very different. Maybe it's the way the ball doesn't seem to obey the laws of physics or the fact that there are numerous incidental animations (stretcher bearers, streakers, physiotherapists, etc) which interrupt the flow of play. Maybe it's all these things and more because, whatever it is, Football Glory leaves me absolutely cold.

It's still a competent enough football game, however, and like Sensi you can play a one- or two-player match, compete in a variety of tournaments and leagues and take command of either club or national sides. As for those features I mentioned, Football Glory has all the usual in-game moves and options (i.e. substitutions, tactical changes, etc) but it also boasts a few new ones like the ability to do bicycle kicks and to leap over sliding tackles.

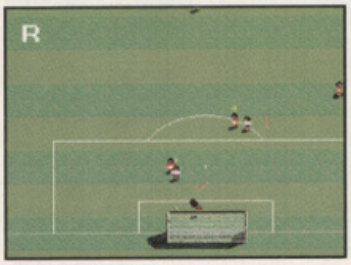
But by far the most notable difference is Football Glory's use of 'humourous' animations. These occur randomly in the game and include a fan who runs onto the pitch, pursued by an angry policeman, and a streaker. In addition, if any of your players are felled by a crunching tackle, the physio will dash on with his magic sponge and, if things look particularly nasty, the stretcher-bearers will carry the unfortunate player off. Lastly, and I don't mind these at all, FG features various goal celebrations, where enthusiastic fans lob fireworks onto the pitch and players run to the corner flag to dance and jump in John Travolta-style joy.

But while you can take these animations or leave them, one thing that you can't ignore is the strange, exaggerated aftertouch. Like in Sensi, moving the joystick after you've kicked the ball allows you to make the ball swerve or rise in the air. But in Football Glory, the flight of the ball doesn't seem to obey the laws of physics — with a sharp movement of the joystick you can practically bend a shot round in a right angle. It has to be seen to believed, and while watching the ball fly into the goal from impossible angles is initially amusing, it's hardly realistic and, as far as I'm concerned, it's the final nail in the Football Glory coffin.

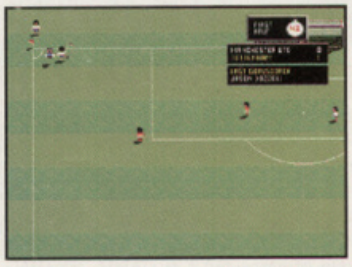
If you've already got Sensi or you've dumped Sensible's tiny geezer technology for the delights of EA's FIFA Soccer, then I really wouldn't waste any time with Football Glory at all. It's an average football game, certainly playable but annoying and frustrating for most of the time. If you're desperate for a new football game, I'd hang on a bit longer for Sensible World Of Soccer. If the PC coders have fixed the playability problems that plagued the original game and if it's half as good as the Amiga version, then believe me it will have been worth the wait.



Get up you wimp! A Brazillian player writhes in agony as the physio whips out his magic sponge.



Sheringham to Barmby. Barmby to Klinsmann and it's a goal!! The keeper had no chance.



Football Glory has lots of little pitch animations, and the players jump and do a little jig after a goal.

(Right) Like most football games, Football Glory allows you to fiddle with your squad and change the formation and the overall team tactics.

FOOTBALL GLORY

BLACK LEGEND/CROTEAM

(01438) 840004

£24.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- The humourous anims are initially quite amusing.
- It's almost exactly the same as Sensible Soccer.

...AND THE BAD

- Unfortunately, it doesn't play as well as Sensible Soccer.
- The animations are annoying.
- The aftertouch is over-exaggerated. Banana shots anyone?

Overall

66%

MEGATRAVELLER I
£14.99
"Brilliantly balanced between complexity and playability... a triumph of intelligent game design" ***Amiga Computing 95%***

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£14.99
"a colourful, taxing, yet fun to play wargame with an action packed 3-D battle element"
PC Home

DARKSEED
£14.99
"Wonderous, macabre... it's not often I thank someone for a nightmare"
Compute magazine

Fact or Fiction?

Action SIXTEEN

empire INTERACTIVE
CYBERDREAMS™

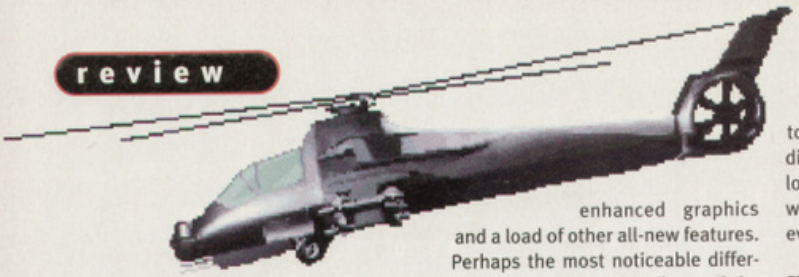
Digital Integration

VISA

Available from leading retail outlets. In case of difficulty phone 01276 684959.

Available on CD ROM, AMIGA & IBM PC formats.
(Darkseed also available on Macintosh.)

For a catalogue send S.A.E. to: Digital Integration Limited, Watchmoor Trade Centre, Watchmoor Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3AJ.



Jungle Strike CD

STOP PRESS! Chimps down tools in banana factory during strike in the jungle! Alex Simmons reports...

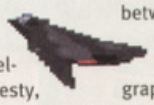
Crack open the bubbly and light the cigars because the mother of all blasters, Desert Strike, has given birth to two healthy sons. The newborn Urban Strike was delivered just a few months ago onto the Mega Drive, and now the eldest son, Jungle Strike, has just made his first, tentative steps onto the PC — and once again, it's Gremlin Interactive who acted as the mid-wife.

For those unfamiliar with Jungle Strike, suffice to say that it's a natural progression from Desert Strike, which retains the original game's slick isometric-3D viewpoint and stimulating gameplay, but adds completely overhauled, FMV-enhanced graphics and a load of other all-new features.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference between Jungle Strike and its sand-ridden forefather, apart from the more defined and indeed even more colourful presentation, is the inclusion of not one but four advanced combat vehicles. Replacing the outdated Apache Gunship is the fresh-faced Comanche Attack Helicopter. Although it may look different to the AH-64, the Comanche handles in much the same way and even carries the same lethal weapon combo of the Vulcan chaingun, Hydra light rockets and deadly Hellfire air-to-surface missiles.

Taking to the water, the XL-9 Hovercraft also moves like the helicopter, but rather than gliding through the air it slides across the landscapes (it also bears an unfortunate resemblance to a giant red slipper!). Instead of packing Hellfire missiles, the Hovercraft is able to drop powerful mines from its rear. These, it has to be said, are fairly useless against stationary targets, but are excellent for disabling submarines and heavily-armoured speedboats.

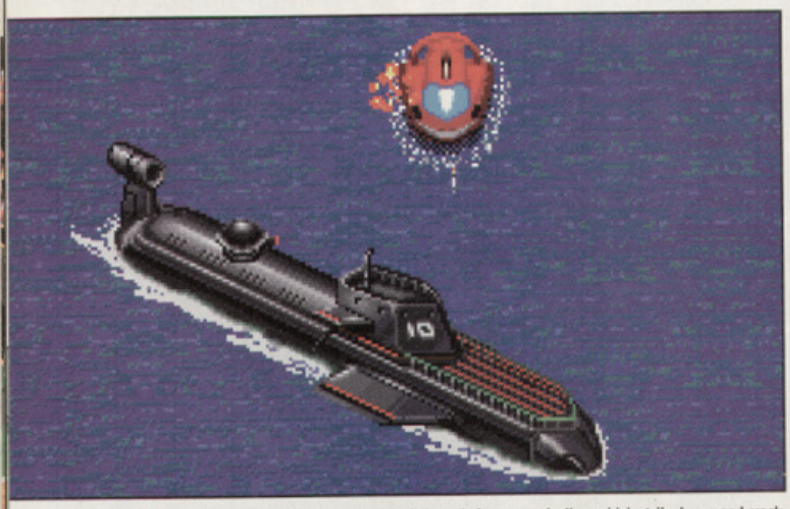
The ridiculous Assault Cycle is also equipped with mines, but these are primarily used for cracking open the weak underbellies of armoured cars. In all honesty, the bike is a complete waste of space because, while it may add a little variety to the game, the damn thing is more difficult to control than the helicopter! It looks pathetic too; I mean, come on — would you be scared of a 50cc scooter, even if a Green Beret *was* riding it?



Back in the skies, the F-117A Stealth Fighter is again awkward to control as it (obviously) can't hover on the spot. Therefore you must repeatedly fly over any targets, releasing a hail of iron bombs in the vague hope of scoring a direct hit. Landing the bugger is tricky too, as you have to guide it along a narrow landing strip cut into the middle of the Amazon jungle!

Jungle Strike is packed with 10 huge campaigns, providing a total of over 50 individual missions. Objectives are varied, and range from straightforward all-out assaults to protection runs in which the President Of America must be shielded from Carlos Ortega's terrorist army. Ortega is (apparently) the World's most infamous drug baron. He's now teamed up with Kilbaba the Younger, the revenge-seeking son of the mad General who was killed at the end of Desert Strike, and together they plan to launch a full nuclear strike on the good ol' US of A from their Amazonian hide-out.

This foul plot is gradually revealed via snippets of full-motion video footage which pop up from time to time between campaigns. The mission briefings are also depicted using FMV clips and, like the graphics in general, they're very clean and crisp. The sound is good too, with clear speech during mission brief-



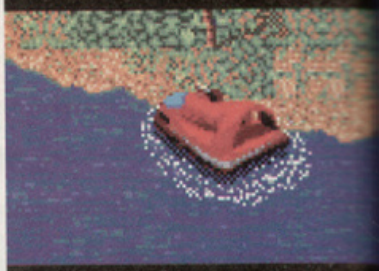
Dive! Dive! Ortega's incompetent sub commander fails to dodge your missiles, which strike home and crack a gaping hole in the side of hull. Drop a couple of mines to finish him off.

Take out the enemy tanks and armoured cars with the powerful Hellfire missiles.

The Drug Baron's army has shacked up in the northern snowy wastes, but this won't stop you!

Death From Above

Comanche Attack 'Copter
Similar in many ways to Desert Strike's AH-64 Apache, the Comanche is both highly-manoeuvrable and packs a powerful punch.



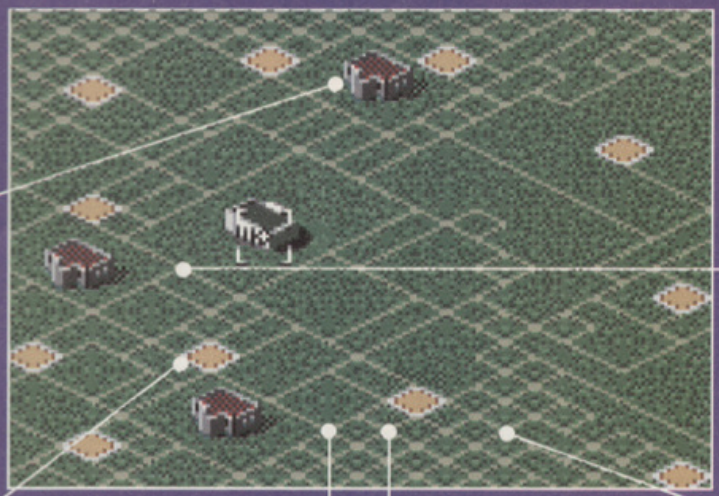
XL-9 Hovercraft
The Hovercraft glides easily over both ground and water, and is equipped with mines as well as rockets and machines guns.

Special Forces Assault Cycle
Assault cycle? Raleigh Chopper more like! The bike is difficult to control, but again boasts an impressive arsenal.

F-117A Nighthawk
The Stealth fighter carries a payload of destructive iron bombs, but has the disadvantage of not being able to hover.

Monuments

The objective of the first mission is to seek out and protect three of Washington DC's most famous landmarks — the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial and the Library of Congress — from hostile enemy fire.



Motorcade

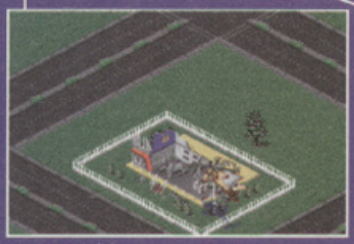
During his undercover operation, Akbar discovered the enemy plans to attack the President's motorcade when he returns to Washington. Clear the roads leading to The White House, eliminating any enemy units lying in wait.

Terrorist HQ

Ortega's commanders have shacked up in four buildings throughout the city. Find each hide-out and blow it to pieces, using Hydras to crack open the buildings then switching over to cannons to mop up the fleeing troops.

Car Bombs

Having successfully destroyed the terrorist HQs, the enemy have retaliated by planting five car bombs which are set to explode next to several foreign embassies. You must find and destroy them all before they detonate.



Agent Akbar

Special agent Akbar has been captured by the terrorists and is being held hostage in a small building on the outskirts of town. The police have surrounded the building, but fly through their blockades and get him out yourself.

Sniper

Now that the President is safely back inside The White House, you've got plenty of time to capture the renegade sniper. He's lurking on top of a U-shaped Government building — but make sure you take him alive...

It's a bit like...

...Desert Strike, which comes as no great surprise. Although Desert Strike doesn't offer the player four vehicles to choose between, it's extremely playable and is one of the most challenging blasters around. What's more, the CD version includes a totally new campaign to sink your teeth into.

Prior to each campaign a co-pilot is chosen from a roster of five, although a couple are 'missing in action' and must be rescued during the game before they can return to duty. Each of them is rated on both their gunnery and winching skills, which affect how accurately the weapons are fired and how long it takes to pick up bonuses and prisoners from the ground. Once your co-pilot is selected, you head off into the warzone...

Although Jungle Strike is essentially a shoot-'em-up, it's far from mindless. As in Desert Strike, the key to success is strategy — just flying around, all guns blazing, will get you nowhere. So, to help you plan your air strikes, there's a map screen available which gives an in-depth description of each mission objective, as well as the locations of any POWs, the whereabouts of the various ammo and fuel storage bays and the current positions of most of the enemy units.

Although Jungle Strike is a great game, for all its enhancements I personally think Desert Strike is still the better of the two. The reason for this is simple: although all of the missions featuring the Comanche are excellent and are every bit as thrilling and action-packed as those in its predecessor, when the other craft are introduced the game becomes frustrating. Not because it's impossibly difficult (although Jungle Strike is pretty tough), but because none of the other craft handle as well or are as satisfying to fly as the chopper. Agreed, their inclusion is a brilliant idea, but I don't think it's been particularly well implemented.

Nevertheless, although Jungle Strike doesn't *quite* have the edge over its superlative parent, it still remains one of the most captivating blasts of late.

JUNGLE STRIKE CD

GREMLIN/IN-HOUSE

(01742) 753423

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- An exciting and well-structured shoot-'em-up.
- The four vehicles make it more varied than Desert Strike.
- All in all, it's extremely challenging.

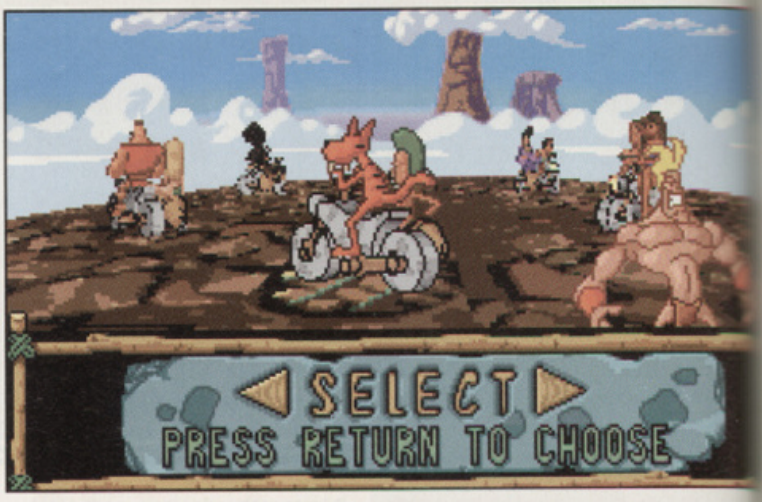
...AND THE BAD

- Helicopter aside, the vehicles are awkward to control and almost appear to have been added as an afterthought.

Overall

81%

BC Racers



Dave Upchurch is a bit of an old dinosaur so he seemed the perfect candidate to review Core Design's new prehistoric racer.

You know those games which just grab you by the unmentionables and hold your attention, forcing you to come back for more and more and more and no matter how long you play them, you just can't stop because they're so wickedly, mind-bogglingly good? You do? Well BC Racers is absolutely nothing like that. Sorry. But it is, however, a bit of a giggle despite its many flaws.

Set sometime back in the days when bear-skinned (and frequently bare-skinned) humanoids mingled freely with dinosaurs, BC Racers is a Mario Kart/Wacky Wheels-style 3D driving game. After you've picked your team of two from the racers on offer (all of whom have varying levels of acceleration, energy, speed and attack), you get to drive the meanest machines of the day, all of which are all kitted out with the most sophisticated technology that the Jurassic era has to offer.

With one racer in the driving seat, the other team member is free to indulge in a bit of gratuitous violence, namely battering the heck out of any opponents unfortunate enough to come into range. Just get in close, bash the button, watch the fists fly accompanied by a series of cartoony 'biffs' and 'wallops' and, hey presto, one sad opponent out of the picture. It's a neat aspect to the game, but Core could and should have made a little more of this feature, perhaps including a choice of weapons or some bonus pick-ups to use against the other racers.

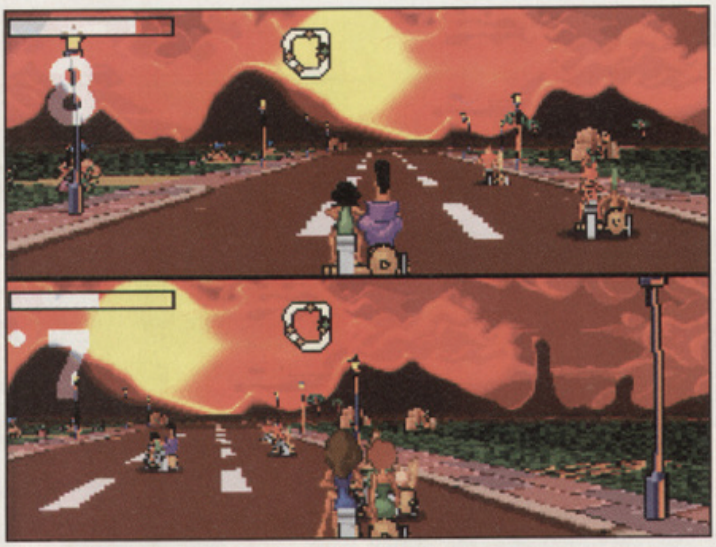
Violence aside, your main aim is to go very fast indeed without crashing into the assorted obstacles en route, like barriers, houses, trees and potholes. Take too many hits and your little dinosaur damage meter becomes a skeleton and you're out of the race. Thankfully you can repair and refuel your prehistoric scooter by driving over strategically-placed Dino-steaks.

BC Racers has seven different tracks which take you through villages, jungles, forests and deserts. The second level is raced in the dark lit only by the glare of your headlights — not a bad idea you might think, but the graphics are so pixellated that you can't see where you're going. The water level is the best of the bunch — you have to hare round the track but line yourself up after the corners so you hit the bridge at the right angle otherwise you're sunk.

BC Racers also offers several difficulty levels. On the 'Easy' setting the game is a bit too much of a doddle, but stick it on the 'Rock Hard' setting and you get unbelievably windy tracks and much tougher opponents, presenting much more of a challenge.

As with most racing games, the two-player split-screen mode is the most fun, with one player using the keyboard and the other using the joystick. Avoid the mouse, though — it just makes the game totally unplayable.

All in all, BC Racers isn't a bad game, but after playing it you're left with a feeling that the programmers could have done so much more with the game. In its present state it sadly lacks that certain *je ne sais quoi* which makes a game a winner.



(Above) In two-player mode on a 33MHz 486 the action becomes a little jerkier than in one-player mode, but not so much that the game becomes unplayable.

(Above) Before each race the competitors parade before you, allowing you to inspect their individual racing stats and so choose the racing team that's best suited to you.
(Top) Brick scoots into fifth place — and with four laps still to go, there's plenty of time to reach first.

BC RACERS

CORE DESIGN/IN-HOUSE

(01332) 297797

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

486, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Gravis Ultrasound and General Midi soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Good control system.
- Belting the opposition is great fun.
- It's a bit of an all-round laugh...

...AND THE BAD

- The graphics are scrappy in patches.
- It lacks depth which means that the fun element isn't a lasting phenomenon.

Overall

70%

Legions

Alex Simmons goes back in time with Mindscape...

Legions is a Windows-based strategy game based in the Roman era. Unlike many of its competitors, it's surprisingly easy to pick up and it's one of the few wargames where you don't have to plough through a weighty manual before you can traipse out onto the battlefield. Anyone with an ounce of common sense will quickly learn the functions of each control icon, and basic actions like moving between encampments is a quick and simple process.

The game is essentially divided into three areas, namely combat, trading, and diplomacy. The aim of the game is obviously to overpower the enemy forces, and this can be done through either sheer brute force or by adopting a more subtle approach and forming alliances with neighbouring armies and gradually cutting off all trade links with the enemy.

Whatever style you choose, it's almost inevitable that combat will ensue at some point in the game. The choice of unit types is extensive, ranging from archers to spearmen to chariot-riding soldiers. However, should they all fall foul of the enemy's whirling blades there's always the last resort — phosphorus-covered pigs, ignited and sent rampaging through enemy ranks! Effective, but very, very, *very* sick!

Orders are issued to each unit, each of which has its own pros and cons which affect the outcome of each fight. Disappointingly, though, these specific attributes are often ignored during larger conflicts, and the various unit gel together to form one big army without any real individual statistics.

Featuring numerous random and historical scenarios and a selection of difficulty settings to cater for all gamers, Legions is a commendable attempt at the wargaming genre. But for all of its good points, Legions just doesn't have the depth — or indeed the atmosphere — to guarantee much-needed long-term appeal.

LEGIONS

MINDSCAPE/AZURIS INC.

(01444) 246333

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 486, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 14Mb of hard disk space, mouse and Windows 3.1 or greater.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The icon system is easy to use
- The network option is good.
- The hefty manual is well-researched and interesting.

...AND THE BAD

- Legions isn't that action-packed, even for a wargame.
- Lacking in atmosphere and depth, and therefore is woefully short of any real long-term appeal.

Overall

61%

Sim City Urban Renewal Kit

Alex Simmons went back to the drawing board with Maxis' Sim City paint package.

Having destroyed all your hard work with Great Disasters Volume 1, Simmeisters Maxis continue to exploit the Sim City phenomenon with the release of the Urban Renewal Kit.

SCURK is a user-friendly paint utility which allows the player, or in this case the designer, to redraw and create their own buildings and constructions for use within Sim City 2000. Grotty tower blocks can be transformed into glistening skyscrapers within hours, using the selection of drawing tools hiding at the side of the screen.

SCURK is a powerful utility, though, and is capable of far more than just redesigning the cities you've spent weeks creating. You have complete freedom to build your own metropolis from scratch without the hassle of taking into account money, population, time and development restraints. Just pick a building, dump it on the ground and keep going until you've filled the plot of land. What's more, Maxis have included an entirely new set of futuristic buildings with which to revamp your city, so you don't have to be artistically talented to benefit from SCURK.

Costing just under £20, SCURK is reasonably priced and is undoubtedly a well-presented product. However, because the utility has rather limited appeal, the Urban Renewal Kit is an application which will really only appeal to avid Sim Heads.

SIM CITY URBAN RENEWAL KIT

MAXIS/IN-HOUSE

(0171) 490 2333

£19.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 486, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 3Mb of hard disk space, mouse and Sim City 2000.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards; HP550c, HP LaserJet, Epson and Postscript printers.

THE GOOD...

- An excellent extension to Sim City, providing you're willing to painstakingly design your own buildings.
- Very user-friendly.

...AND THE BAD

- Unless you *love* Sim City, you probably won't like SCURK.

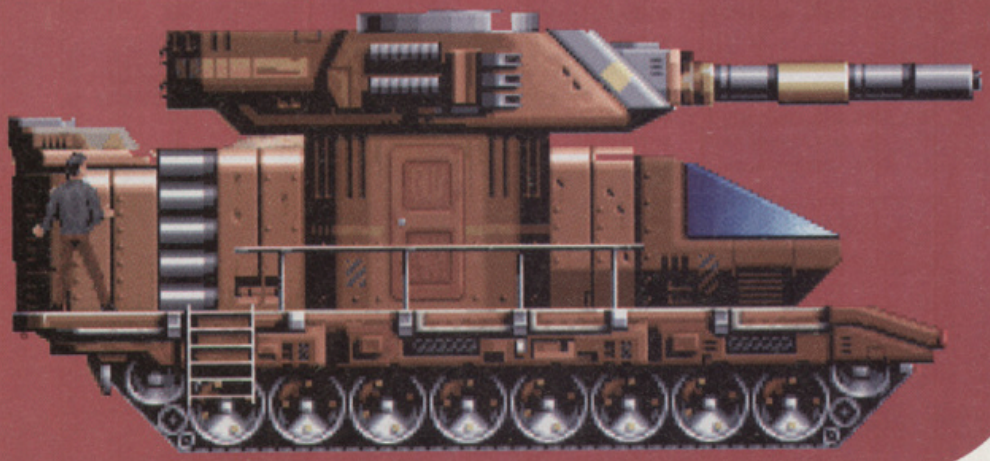
Overall

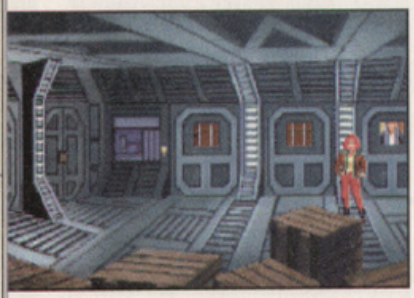
72%

review

Nice David Upchurch sat down at his nice PC and started to play Psygnosis's extremely nice adventure...

Guilty CD





In Guilty you can choose whether to play as Ysanne Andropath (above) or Jack T. Ladd (below), with the game puzzles altering accordingly.

A contradiction in term it may be, but the word "nice" is actually a pretty horrible adjective — particularly if you're applying it to a bloke. It's a well known fact that if a girl describes a fella as "really nice" then what she actually means is, she could never fancy him if he was the last man on Earth and she's about to crap on him from a great height and go out with his mate who thinks he's God's gift to female-kind and treats all women like dirt.

Guilty, the new graphic adventure from Liverpool-based Psygnosis, falls neatly into the "nice" category. There's nothing really earth-shattering involved at all, just nice graphics, nice sound, nice gameplay and so on — there's nothing offensive to the senses, but by the same token there's nothing on display to make the Earth move either. Fortunately, it's saved from complete sadness by its completely un-nice anti-hero Jack T. Ladd — intergalactic ne'er-do-well and the kind of un-PC chap who makes Bernard Manning look like a caring, sharing 90s' man.

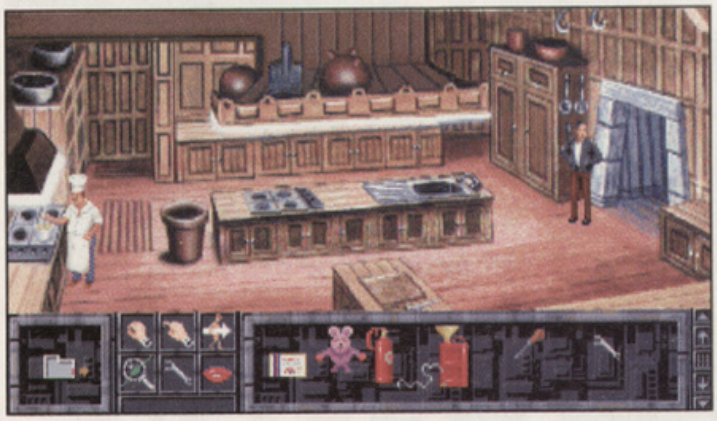
In the game's prequel, Innocent Until Caught, our main man was the epitome of decadence — a womanising, cheating, gambling, lying, thief, who was being relentlessly pursued by the Powers That Be (i.e the tax office) who felt it their God-given duty to rearrange every part of his body on account of the fact that he owed them huge amounts of cash, did a runner and blew a huge raspberry whilst doing so. This was not a wise move — as everyone knows, tax collectors are not noted for their senses of humour.

In this second in the series, Jack features similarly endearing qualities, although if you leave him standing idle for a fraction too long, you'll notice that he's added some rather interesting genital-scratching animations to his repertoire of time-wasting moves. The game begins with Jack having been tracked down by some foxy red-headed space cop, who's chased him from end of the galaxy to the other and is now deriving a huge amount of sadistic pleasure from banging him up behind the not-so-secure bars of her spaceship's brig.

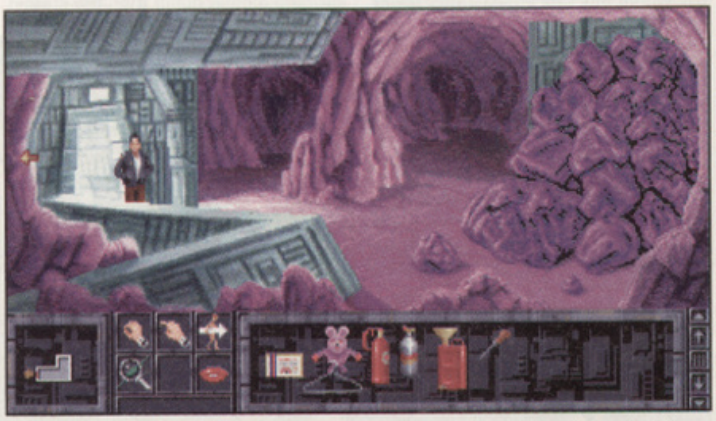
At the beginning of the game you can choose to play either Jack or Ysanne Andropath (the cop) in what turns out to be a lavishly animated and extremely vocal point-n'-click adventure. As Jack your first task is to free yourself from your cell by chatting to and charming a whole heap of droids and the like into do your bidding, picking up masses of objects and then using them in bizarre ways in order to render the ship totally incapable of transporting back to your homeworld, where the only thing you've got to look forward to is your last rights and a particularly unpleasant death by execution.

The control system is a doddle to master — click anywhere on the screen to walk around, move the cursor over objects to take, use or place them in your inventory, or click the 'mouth' icon on a character to begin talking to them. Sometimes the character will talk to you in-game, but more often the game will flip to show two appallingly-dubbed portraits where you're given a multiple choice of sentences which show off the digitised speech nicely in the ensuing conversation.

There are a lot of 'red herring' conversations and objects around, but the best plan is to talk to everybody and pick up any object which isn't tied down



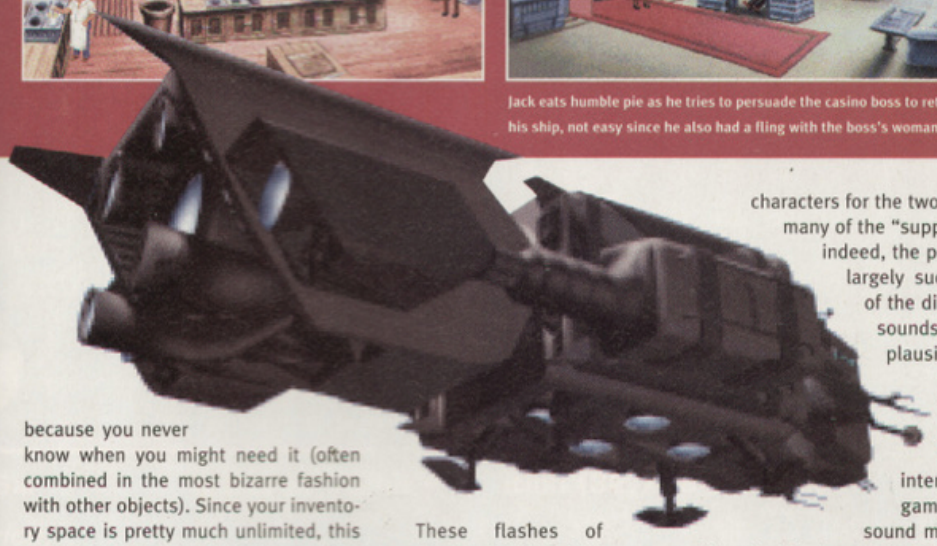
Your punishment for gambling away Ysanne's ship on a rigged card game is to cook up a sauce for the temperamental casino chef — ensure you mix the ingredients in the right order or you could be 'ere for years!



Sam arrives at the mining rockfall a touch too early — first he's got to find and dismantle a warhead then return and blow up the rockpile behind which a secret passage is revealed.

Jack eats humble pie as he tries to persuade the casino boss to return his ship, not easy since he also had a fling with the boss's woman.

As you come into land at a new planet, you're greeted with a rather smart cut screen such as this entry into the ice level.



because you never know when you might need it (often combined in the most bizarre fashion with other objects). Since your inventory space is pretty much unlimited, this isn't a problem.

After disabling the ship your adventure takes you across the whole galaxy to different civilisations where Jack, the ultimate in selfishness and the man who has developed sexism to a recognised art-form, is grudgingly placed in the position where he is forced to help others — freeing planets from alien forces, saving troops, disabling warheads and all that malarkey.

These flashes of uncharacteristic helpfulness are usually achieved under the highly-persuasive influence of his female captor who is never far from the scene. During the course of the game a relationship of sorts builds up between Jack and Ysanne, which tends to be both a plus and a minus from the player's point of view. True, Psygnosis should be given credit for attempting to build up authentic, well-rounded and interesting characters for the two lead players and many of the "supporting cast". And indeed, the programmers have largely succeeded — most of the dialogue reads and sounds fairly natural and plausible, successfully managing to avoid the corny schmaltz usually found in other interactive computer games which would sound more at home in a bad foreign porno film.

But at the end of the day this is an adventure game, and although Jack and Ysanne's constant bickering is faintly entertaining at first, you soon find it becomes tiresome and seriously slows the action down. Okay, all graphic adventures involve loads of chatting and admittedly the digitised speech in Guilty is pretty good, but does it have to be all so long winded?

But despite this gripe, it has to be said that Guilty ain't bad — it's challenging without being too frustrating, most of the puzzles are fairly logical if you really apply yourself to them, and it's nicely presented with sound graphics. There are also several nice touches, like the casino level where Jack not-so-cleverly loses the ship in a card game and then has to try to win it back (I managed to win many of the hands of the weird game I had to play to achieve this — even though I didn't understand the rules, but there you go). On the down side, some of the objects are really hard to see in the heavily-detailed game locations, and the maze sequence — where you're faced with masses of screens, all with four doors to choose from — is just too silly for words. So all in all, Guilty is not a bad game — in fact, it's rather, er... *nice*...

It's a bit like...

...Day Of The Tentacle. Like Guilty, DOTT features multiple 'lead' characters that you can control, but its use of them is much cleverer. Each character is stuck in a different time zone, you see, and to solve puzzles and return home again they have to pass objects down the timelines. Sheer brilliance.

Having blasted the rockpile to smithereens, our hero now has to work out how to make this drilling machine work - not an easy task.

GUILTY CD

PSYGNOSIS/DIVIDE BY ZERO

(0151) 709 5755

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 3Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

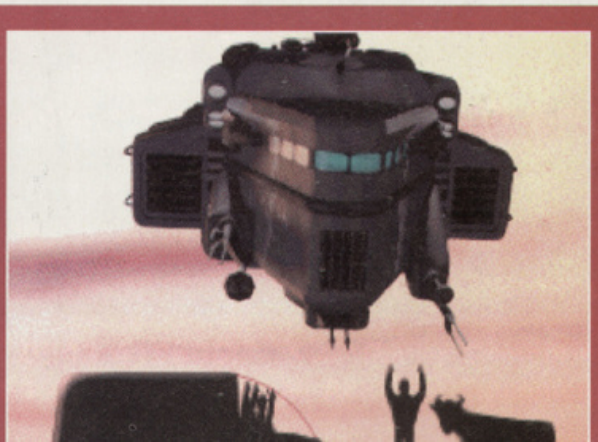
- Nice graphics...
- Nice sound...
- Nice gameplay...
- ...Nice everything really.

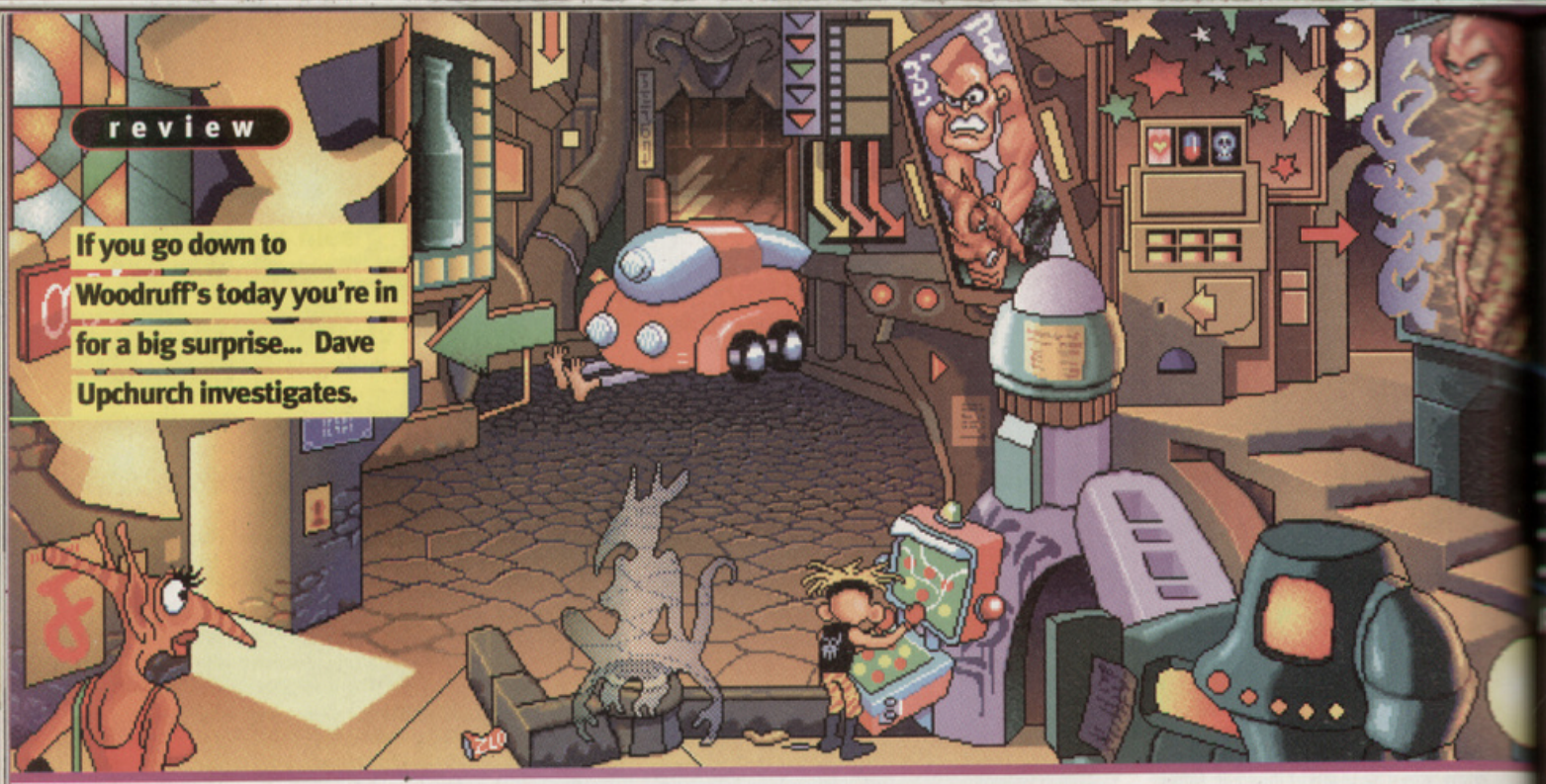
...AND THE BAD

- In my book, nice equals bland — which is only a very short hop away from Dullsville
- The main characters' constant chatting and wisecracks get on your nerves a bit after a while.

Overall

79%





review

If you go down to Woodruff's today you're in for a big surprise... Dave Upchurch investigates.

Woodruff And The Schnibble Of Azimuth CD

"Variety is the spice of life," (William Cowper, 1731 — 1800) "but obscurity is the source of extreme irritation" (David Upchurch). I've often made the point that there's a very fine line between puzzles that are too obvious and puzzles that are frustratingly obscure. Unfortunately Woodruff, with his Schnibble and his Azimuth in attendance, passes the line in the wrong direction by about, oooh, 25,634 miles.

Big, beautiful and graphically lavish this point and click adventure may be, but rational in any shape or form whatsoever, it certainly isn't. I hate illogical games like this, and Woodruff is riddled the 'stick the elephant on the pinhead to make the donkey fart to produce a geranium to give to the poodle to get a key' sort of reasoning which, unless you're a genius or a complete nutter, is likely to have you tearing your hair out (and, no doubt the hair of anybody else in the immediate vicinity) in a very short space of time.

Woodruff is strikingly similar to the Goblins puzzle games in that it has some stunning animation, delightful cartoony graphics and top quality digitised speech. The story follows the exploits of young Woodruff who is not only trying to find his father, but on a quest to unearth the secret of the mysterious Schnibble, overthrow the tyrannical Mr Big and, most importantly, avenge the brutal murder of his teddy by a sadistic gang of thugs which you witness in graphic detail in the intro.

Woodruff's world had been a place of harmony for aeons. The humans had to retreat underground after a bit of a cock-up with a nuclear bomb rendered the Earth's air unbreathable, and the whole place was ruled by the peaceful Boozooks. Unfortunately, however, the humans returned and embarked on a reign of terror, enslaving the Boozooks and generally making life unpleasant.

After waking up at his father's house with a headache and partial memory loss, Woodruff can wander around the various locations (in typical point-'n'-click graphic adventure style), speak to everyone he meets and interact with anything that he comes across. In fact, it's a breeze to control — you automatically pick up anything in the area and you just approach someone to start a conversation. You cycle through the conversation by clicking the mouse, but as there's no indication of when the conversation has finished you end up wasting a lot of time on tedious repetition. It's a small niggle, but an irritant all the same.

The game is divided into several individual sections — you can wander round a limited number of them from the start, but you must complete the required number of puzzles in a certain section before moving on to the next. Since you may have up to a dozen items in your inventory at any one time, every one of which you might have to try on every person and object you meet before you get a result, you'd better believe you're not going to get through this one in a hurry.

Overall, Woodruff is bound to appeal to hardened adventure freaks, particularly if you enjoyed the Goblins series, but to us lesser mortals, the obscurity of this game's bizarre logic will quickly kill off any enthusiasm the looks and peachy presentation might have inspired.

(Above) Woodruff learns to read with the help of the, er, 'attractive' barwoman, thus achieving the ultimate aim of the game's first stage.

WOODRUFF AND THE SCHNIBBLE OF AZIMUTH

SIERRA/COKTEL VISION

(01734) 303322

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive, Windows 3.1 and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Gorgeous graphics, excellent speech and cracking animation.
- You are certainly not going to get through it in a hurry.
- User-friendly control system

...AND THE BAD

- The obscurity of the puzzles leads to extreme frustration and, all too soon, boredom.

Overall

68%

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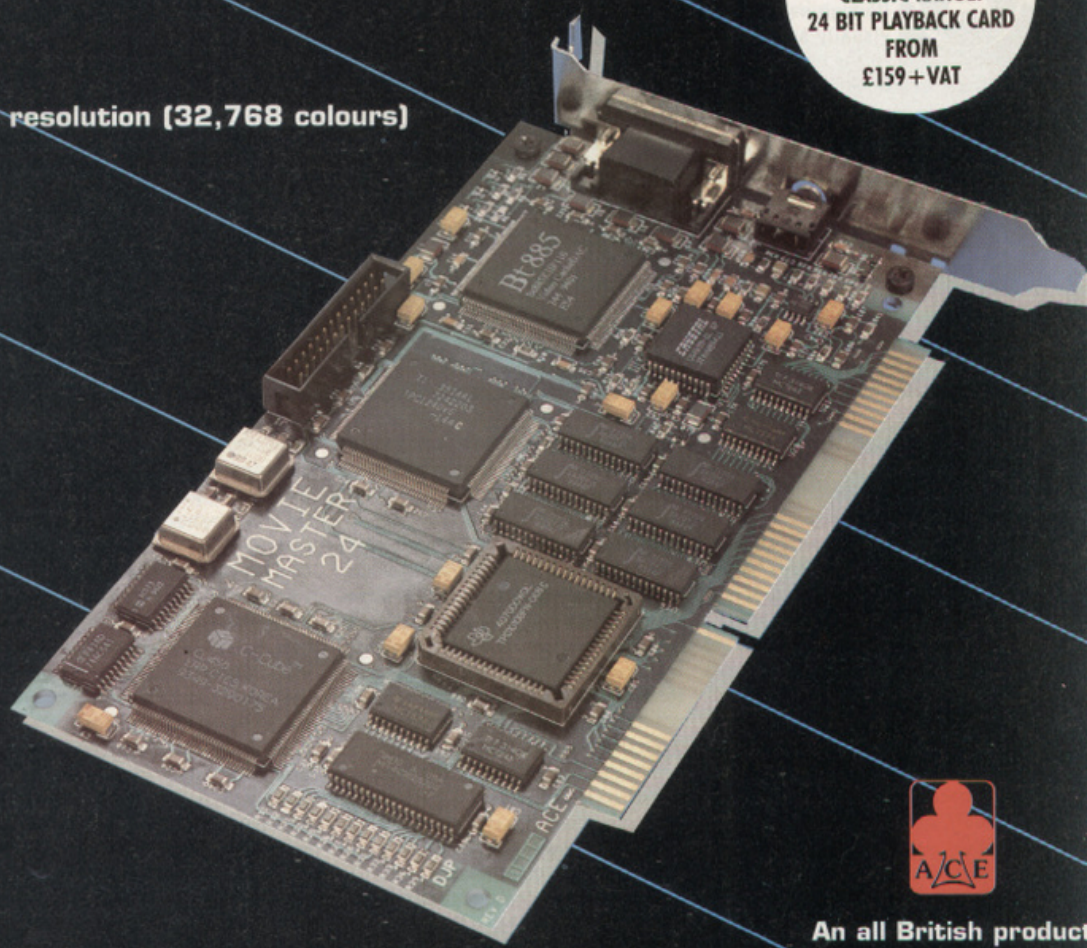

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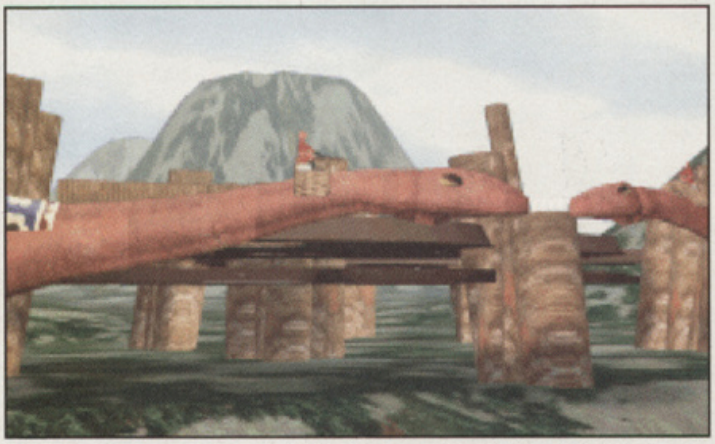
Lost Eden CD

Alex Simmons goes Jurassic larking with Virgin's prehistoric eyeball-sizzler.

Although not *quite* as visually spectacular as the hyper-realistic prehistoric beasts which roamed the celluloid in Steven Spielberg's extravagant Jurassic Park, the dinosaurs indigenous to the lost realm of Eden are almost as worthy of adoration, and retain the typically high graphical quality reflected in Cryo's past games. But also in keeping with previous titles from the famed French developer, Lost Eden is yet another showcase demonstrating the graphical capabilities of the PC while leaving the gameplay to fizzle out on the back burner.



Plodding slowly across the plush grass fields, the apatosaurs may be slow but they're extremely strong. These beasties are capable of constructing huge citadels, so make friends with them first.

Morkus Rex, supreme leader of the Tyrann, is a fierce and vicious warrior. Beware!

Enlist the help of the Amazon tribe to win over the dinosaurs dwelling in the valley.

It's a shame really, because Lost Eden is a great improvement over Cryo's previous graphic adventure, Dragon Lore. Even though much of the game takes place across gorgeous static scenes, these are connected by superb rendered animations which explain the story and also create atmosphere. This wonderful, sometimes eerie atmosphere is further enhanced by the in-game music, a series of Enigma-style ambient tracks that change tempo with the action.

As you can probably already tell from the breathtaking screenshots which grace these very pages, Lost Eden looks wonderful. And believe me, they look even *better* when they're moving. But the problem with Lost Eden is the over-simplistic gameplay. You see, Eden is more of an interactive book than an adventure game, and there's actually very little in the way of things to do and puzzles to solve.

The game is controlled in much the same way as Dragon Lore, with an intelligent cursor highlighting the exits from the scene as well as any areas of interest. If there's an object which can be manipulated, the twirling box will transform into a hand; should there be an item that can be examined in detail, the icon changes into an eye; and so on.

Beginning in the Citadel of Mo, the initial series of tasks are both simple and huddled closely together. For example, Adam, the character under your control, cannot understand a single word spoken by the Citadel guard, and therefore must ask one his dinosaur buddies to translate. Unfortunately his prehistoric pal won't the enter the torture chamber, the room the guard is, erm, guarding. The solution is, like so many puzzles in Eden, simple. The Monk Of Mo will present you with a Talisman Of Courage providing you listen to his pleas. Give the magic amulet to the dinosaur and then she'll (at least I think it's a she!) have the guts to enter the room.

And the puzzles don't really get much harder than that. The aim of the game is to reunite the dinosaurs with the humans so they can battle against the mighty meat-eating Tyranns together. To do this each land in Eden must be protected by a towering citadel, and to construct them you must call upon the help of brontosaurs, apatosaurs, triceratops... even velociraptors.

Now considering they're pretty fed up with the human race, the dinosaurs are easily swayed to join forces with Adam. By consulting the in-game hint utility, which appears in the form of a ghostly dinosaur who communicates with Adam via a shell (eh?!), you'll quickly learn that each of the beasts has a weak spot for certain foodstuffs and jewels. Give mushrooms to the brontosaurs and they'll agree to construct the citadels, while the velociraptors will readily fight the Tyranns if gold is flashed in front of their beady eyes.

This wouldn't be too much of a problem, but you have to feed fungi to the

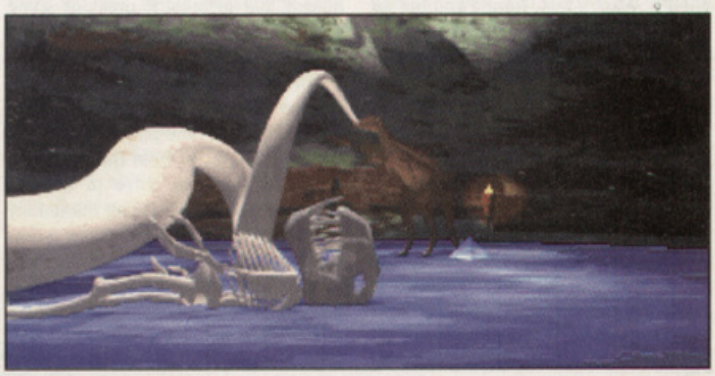
Jurassic Lark! As Adam explores the prehistoric realm of Lost Eden, he is joined in his quest by all manner of weird and wonderful creatures, as he relentlessly tries reunite man and dinosaur.

Monster *In My Pocket*

(Below) These long-toothed beasts are the vicious Tyrann, so don't hang aroundin this valley for too long.
(Right) The mighty apatosaurs build the towering citadels.
(Far right) Triceratops have a weakness for bird's nests. To befriend the creatures, give them a nest but make sure the eggs have gone.
(Below right) Unlike the Velociraptors in Jurassic Park, these fellows will help you out in return for a little gold and a lotta love. Ah...
(Below far right) Brontosaurs can be won over with fried mushrooms.

(Below) Each item you collect is stored in the inventory panel at the bottom of the screen. At the moment, Adam is carrying a dagger, a hint-giving shell, a magical talisman and the skeleton's missing tooth.

(Below) And I'm supposed to be scared of *this*? The tremendous roar that can be heard across Eden comes from this, a tiny dinosaur who's using a gigantic bone to amplify his pathetic snarl.



This is your father. He's a grumpy old sod who doesn't like scissors. Nice beard, dad...*

Inside the citadel of Mo, consult the monk who will guide you on your future quest. He has a pressie for Adam, providing he can find the clear glass prism.

The land of Eden is far to large to be traversed on foot. Instead just click on a realm and Eloi will magically transport you there. Instantly.

bloody brontosaurs time after time until citadels have been built in *every* area of Eden. Boring? Yes. Tedious? Definitely. Performing the same task twice is bad enough, but three or four times is downright diabolical. Maybe if the identical puzzles were spread throughout the game rather than in succession the result would be bearable, but as it stands it's laborious and uninteresting.

It's not all bad though. As mentioned before, Lost Eden looks and sounds fantastic. Every single line of dialogue has been digitised so each person you meet speaks clearly and is easy to understand. What's more the voices actually suit the characters, and the lip-synching, for once, matches the words being spoken. In fact the narrator, Eloi, is the only character whose voice begins to grate after a while.

As for the graphics, yep, they're awesome. The flick-scrolling is annoying, but is tolerable thanks to the slick cut-scenes joining each location. Incidentally, these animations can be skipped by clicking the mouse button, thus speeding the game up no end. Each scene, of which there are hundreds, has been painstakingly rendered and looks phenomenal. The attention to detail is incredible, with nests sitting atop trees in the forest and brightly-coloured fish swimming through the lakes of Chaamer (one of Eden's many realms). If there's one game to impress your friends with, it's Lost Eden.

What's more, the plot, when it finally picks up, is intriguing and on the whole Eden is extremely atmospheric. Because of this the game is fairly enjoyable, if only for a few hours. It's very undemanding game — there aren't any particularly brain-taxing problems to solve and the control system is very easy to use. It's reasonably priced too.

However, if you want a challenge you won't find it here, and no amount of glossy presentation can cover over the gaping holes in Lost Eden's underdeveloped gameplay.

It's a bit like...

...Dragon Lore, which was also developed by French programming team Cryo. Both games are nice to look at but there's very little under their glossy exteriors. What's more, Dragon Lore is lacking all the gorgeous animated sequences which make Eden so appealing. A real turkey if ever there was one.

LOST EDEN CD

VIRGIN/CRYO

(0181) 960 2255

£34.99 OUT MAY

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Lost Eden is arguably one of the best-looking games around.
- The crystal-clear speech actually suits each of the characters.
- The plot, when it finally gets going, is actually quite good.

...AND THE BAD

- Oh dear, it's another software super model — good to look at, but won't keep you entertained for long.
- The repetitive gameplay is te-di-ous.

Overall

70%

Mortal Kombat 2

David Upchurch attempts to become ruler of the Outworld in Acclaim's superb coin-op conversion.

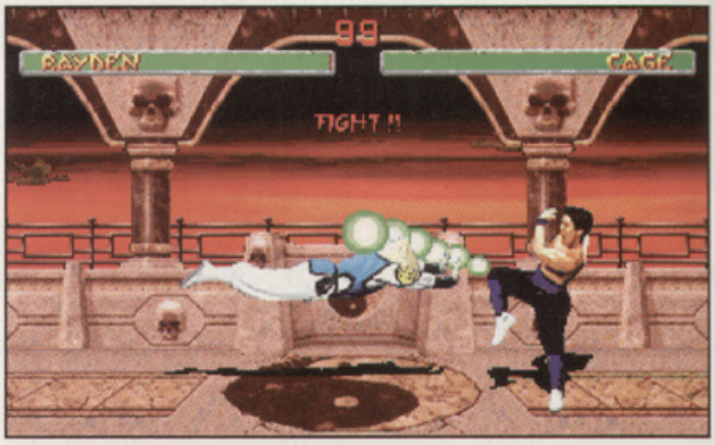
If computer gaming history teaches us anything, it's that beat-'em-ups do not translate well to the PC. What's fast, frantic and fun on the consoles or in the arcades typically becomes slow, staid and a touch sad when converted across to 'our' machine. However, Mortal Kombat 2 is finally here — and it looks as if the gaming history books are going to have to be rewritten.

Yes, it's true — Mortal Kombat 2 on PC is the closest conversion of the Midway coin-op yet, featuring all the beefy thrills and ultra-bloody spills that made the arcade machine such a hit. It also ranks as the finest PC beat-'em-up yet created — although given the pathetic state of the competition, that's not too difficult an accolade to achieve.

Mortal Kombat 2's over-elaborate plot is far too convoluted to go into fully here, but suffice it to say that Shang Tsung, the arch-baddy from the first Mortal Kombat game, has lured his old adversaries — and some brand new ones — to his home in the mysterious Outworld for a rematch. It really is a load of old semi-mystical rubbish to be honest, but at least it provides some *raison d'etre* for the fantastic, often bizarre nature of the fights that follow.

The basic premise of Mortal Kombat 2 is no different to that of any other beat-'em-up. In one-player mode you choose a character from the twelve on offer and then you have to duff up everyone else before facing the unholy trinity of Shang Tsung and his fellow Outworlders, namely the tiger-like Kintaro (a distant cousin of the first game's Goro) and Shao Kahn, Tsung's lord and master.

In two-player mode, on the other hand, each person chooses a character (even the same one if they so wish — the colour of each fighter's clothes changes so you can tell them apart) and then attempts to smash the other in. The victor can then either play on against the computer as in the one-player game, or challenge their vanquished foe to another bout.



Johnny Cage performs his famous 'gob-lobbing knee' move, while Rayden attempts levitating to try and impress all the girls in the audience, the show-off.

Oi! Careful with that bottle of tomato ketchup, JC, I don't think the top's on proper... Oops, too late.

Sub-Zero gets a taste of his own medicine when Baraka hurls an ice spear at him.

Each fight takes place in rounds, with the victor of each being the one who can first reduce his rival's energy bar to zero or has the most energy left when the timer runs out. The first fighter to win two rounds is proclaimed champion and moves on to face the next, tougher challenger.

Okay, so no surprises so far. But the proof of the game is in the playing — and Mortal Kombat 2 plays *very* well indeed. The fighting action is fast, fluid and intensely exciting thanks to the excellently responsive controls, which allow you to perform all manner of combo attacks and aerial acrobatics with ease.

The game is made all the better in one-player mode by the computer opponents' superb artificial intelligence. If you repeat the same attack moves over and over again your rivals soon learn to block them, forcing you to constantly revise your strategies and tactics. Even in the lowest of the game's five difficulty settings, Mortal Kombat 2 is a real challenge.

One of Mortal Kombat 2's best features is the sheer variety of characters and the wide range of distinctive individual moves they each possess. The kombatants don't

Rogue's Gallery

Many of your Mortal Kombat favourite — like Liu Kang, Johnny Cage, Rayden and Scorpion — return to do battle again in Mortal Kombat 2. However, there are some absentees — notably Sonya Blade, Kano and Goro — and a whole host of fresh new faces...

Baraka, a follower of Shao Kahn, belongs to a race of nomadic mutants who roam the Outworld.

Jax, AKA Major Jackson Briggs, has travelled to the Outworld on a mission to rescue Lt Sonya Blade.

Kitana, along with her twin sister Mileena, is one of Shao Kahn's personal assassins.

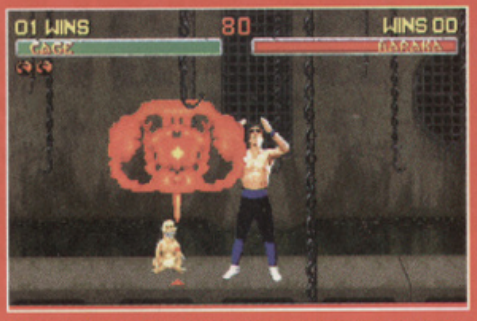
Kung-Lao is the last descendant of the great Kung-Lao who was killed by Goro 500 years ago.

Makin' *Moves*

If you manage to defeat an opponent without losing a round, you're given the chance to perform one of three types of special 'finishing move'...

The Fatality move is the most violent. Here's the swoonsome Baraka literally making Mileena lose her head. What a guy...

If you're feeling generous, however, you can opt to perform a Friendship move. Here you go, Shang — no hard feelings, eh?



Finally there's the Babality move. Here Johnny Cage turns Baraka into a gurgling, pant-wetting infant. Isn't he *cute*?

merely thump and kick each other into submission — they throw razor-brimmed hats and knife-edged fans, hurl ice bolts and fireballs, spit acid... you name it. Some characters can even teleport around the screen, while Shang Tsung has the unique ability to morph into other characters at will!

Naturally, these powerful 'special moves' aren't easy to pull off. Most are activated by a unique combination of key presses, and it takes practice before you learn how to produce them with any sort of regularity. However, thanks to the superb controls they're a lot easier to accomplish than in most other beat-'em-ups.

The icing on the cake is the game's scores of hidden features. For example, if you defeat an opponent without conceding a round yourself, you get the chance to perform a special, potentially gruesome 'finishing move'. On top of that there are three 'bonus' kombatants — Jade, Smoke and Noob Saibot — although how you get to fight them must remain a secret for now. There are even rumours of a hidden 'Pong' game, although try as I might I couldn't find it.

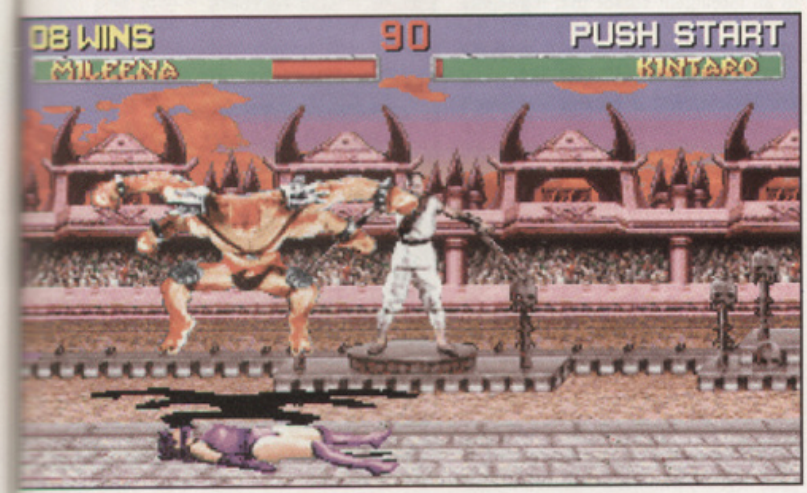
All of these factors contribute to make Mortal Kombat 2 an immensely satisfying game to play. Defeating each opponent takes thought and real skill as opposed merely to fast responses and a faster trigger finger, and the pride you feel when, for example, you finally down a rival with a perfectly-executed special move is simply unbelievable.

After all this praise you're probably ready to rush off and buy Mortal Kombat 2 now, but before you do so there are few words of warning. The first is that Mortal Kombat 2 is not a game for the squeamish or the easily offended — it is *incredibly* gory, and there's rarely a moment when blood isn't spurting from at least one of the kombatants. Some of the finishing moves, in particular, are very nasty, with fighters exploding, being cut in half and decapitated. Those intending to buy this game to keep the young 'uns happy have been warned...

Also, I wouldn't recommend playing Mortal Kombat 2 on the keyboard — there are simply to many keys to keep track of, and it's near impossible to get any flow going. I found Mortal Kombat 2 at its best when played with a joypad.

My final warning is about the game's speed. You really need a good PC to see Mortal Kombat 2 at its best — and by that I mean a 66MHz 486. Although it's still very playable on a 33MHz 486, there's the occasional jerk and slow down which spoils the fun a little bit. Although you can reduce the number of special effects and background animations if speed is a real problem, the game's more fun with them switched on.

So there you have it — after what seems like an eternity there's finally a good beat-'em-up on PC. Let's just hope that combat fans don't have to wait so long for the next one...



Mileena only has to defeat Kintaro and then she'll be face-to-face with the ultimate baddy, Shao Kahn. Trouble is, it doesn't look like the tiger-like fiend is going to let her win. Not very gentlemanly, is it?

It's a bit like...

...Rise Of The Robots, which was the most recent game to try and earn the "Best Beat-'Em-Up On PC" accolade — and failed. There's no real comparison, to be honest; with its fluid play, excellent AI and massive range of opponents, MK2 gets so right what Rise got so wrong. Hopefully Mirage will fare better with Rise 2...

MORTAL KOMBAT 2

ACCLAIM/PROBE SOFTWARE

(0171) 344 5000

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 20Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; joypad; Sound Blaster, Gravis UltraSound and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Quite simply the best beat-'em-up on PC by a long shot.
- Wide variety of combatants to choose from.
- Impressive range of fluid, easy-to-execute combat moves.

...AND THE BAD

- A touch jerky, even when played on a decent 486 PC.
- May be too violent for the kiddies.

Overall

88%

Reptile, who was the secret 'hidden' baddy in MK1, is Shang Tsung's personal bodyguard.

Mileena has been ordered to keep an eye on her sister Kitana, who Kahn suspects is a traitor.

Shang Tsung was the arch baddy in MK1, but has been downgraded to a 'common' fighter in MK2.

Budget Reviews

If there's something cheap in your software shop, who you gonna call? Er, Budget Reviews! (A special warning to PC GAMES' readers: We are all trained, professional journos — do not attempt crap intros like that at home.)

Fun & Games: Cannon Fodder & Beneath A Steel Sky[CD]

War has never been so much fun... or such good value, as Sensible Software's brilliant Cannon Fodder is now available on Telstar's first Fun & Games bundle. Cannon Fodder is a simple yet extremely addictive top-down shooter in which you guide a team of soldiers across various landscapes, blasting everything in sight — it's really as easy as that... almost.

Although the concept behind Cannon Fodder is simple, in practice it's a whole lot tougher, as enemy soldiers stream through the jungle, guns blazing, grenades exploding, blood spilling. Yup, some may say Cannon Fodder is just one big, sick joke, but personally I think it's one of the most humorous and entertaining games around.

The game's mouse-driven controls are well designed, but while Cannon Fodder is easy to play, it's by no means short of challenge. Some of the later stages are very difficult, as the enemy trundle on in tanks capable of wiping out an entire squad in a single shot!

Cannon Fodder is without a shadow of a doubt one of the most addictive blasts on PC, but what makes this whole bundle so appealing is that Cannon Fodder is accompanied by Beneath A Steel Sky, a damn fine graphic adventure set in the grim, dark future.

Cast as Robert Foster, a kid raised in the desolate outback known as The Gap, you've been kidnapped by 'The Company' for reasons unknown. By interacting with other characters and solving puzzles you'll eventually discover just what's going on, and find out that your past in not all that it seems...

Developed by Revolution Software in collaboration with comic artist Dave Gibbons, BASS uses a similar interface to that seen in The Legend Of Kyrandia, but is vastly improved by the inclusion of an intelligent cursor that highlights anything of interest. This doesn't make the puzzles any easier though. Most are solved through object manipulation and are logical, which means you won't waste hours thinking up bizarre solutions to essentially easy puzzles.

Put simply, Beneath A Steel Sky is brilliant, both in terms of presentation (there's full digitised dialogue throughout) and gameplay.

Bundling one of the most playable action games with Revolution's moody point-'n'-click adventure is an excellent idea, and at £40 this package represents supremely good value.

TELSTAR/VIRGIN
(0181) 878 7888
£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**
25MHz 386, 2Mb RAM, VGA, 11Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**
Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 89%

Elite Plus

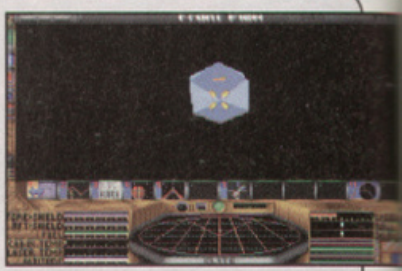
***The* original space trading game, Elite Plus is the enhanced VGA version of Braben and Bell's classic. Although lacking the texture-mapped beauty and gratuitous FMV of the likes of Wing Commander 3, Elite is one of those games that while being basic in appearance, is absolutely bursting with gameplay. It's as playable and absorbing now as it ever was**

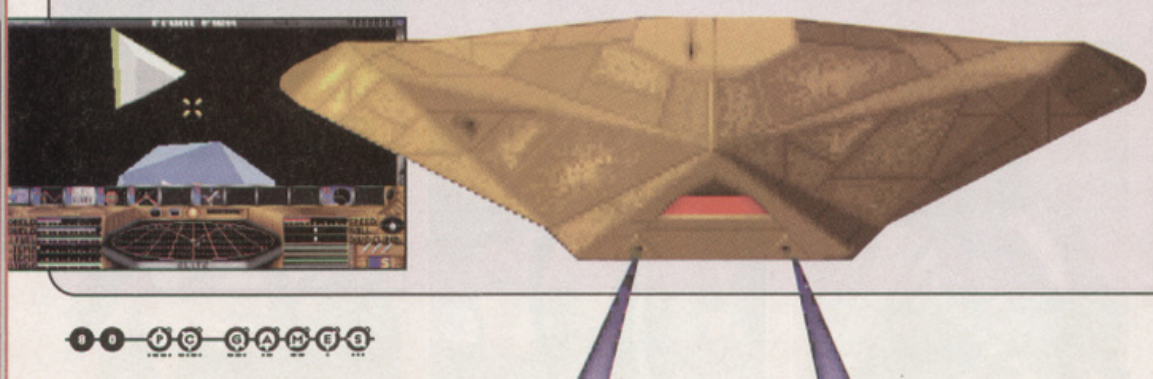
Elite Plus is simply huge, and features a whopping 2000 planets dotted across some eight galaxies. Naturally exploring a system of this size takes time, and that's the beauty of Elite. You can spend months exploring the universe and *still* not see all the sights!

Beginning with a fully-equipped MkII Cobra, by zipping through space, cargo bays full to the brim, you can progress to bigger, better starships (of which there are 20) by selling off your freight for a better price. Strapping powerful hi-tech weaponry to your ship will give you the much-needed edge in combat, and by notching up kills you can eventually progress through the ranks to reach the ultimate star-pilot rating of Elite.

Although there are six missions to undertake, you have the freedom to travel wherever you like, providing you have enough fuel to get there. If not, you could find yourself stranded in deep space, waiting for interplanetary rescue to turn up.

Elite Plus looks, as you'd expect, considerably dated when compared against it younger brother, Frontier: Elite II. Also, with the imminent release of Frontier 2: First Encounters, Elite Plus really does look incredibly archaic. But for just under £17, this budget title does offer a pleasant and highly-playable trip back down memory lane.





ACTION 16/EMPIRE
(01276) 684959
£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**
286, VGA and 640k RAM.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**
Joystick; Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 73%

Fun & Games: Alone In The Dark & Shadow Of The Comet[CD]

The work of horror novelist HP Lovecraft provides the inspiration for Telstar's second Fun & Games pack which features the scary-but-excellent Alone In The Dark and Infogrames' disturbingly primitive Shadow Of The Comet. Both games revolve around Gothic adventures in which demon spirits haunt the living and rotting zombies are raised from the dead, and while both games can be termed graphic adventures, they tackle the genre in two very different ways.

Alone In The Dark, as I'm sure you already know, is a 3D romp through a haunted mansion infested with ghosts and ghouls. Controlling ghost-bustin' PI Edward Carnby or his female counterpart, Emily Hartwood, the terrible secret of the Derceto mansion is slowly unveiled as you search for clues to the mysterious death of the household's owner, Jimmy Hartwood.

Within seconds of entering the house the nightmare begins, as all manner of hell-spawn crawl from under the floor boards and attack Camby. Bad boy Eddie can retaliate by punching and kicking if they get too close, or he can grab weapons such as a six-shot revolver or rifle to take them out — fortunately, you don't need silver bullets to kill the buggers in this game.

Alone In The Dark CD is a brilliant game, combining excellent graphics, a haunting musical score and spine-chilling sound effects to create a spooky atmosphere that'll make you scream for help! Unfortunately this level of atmosphere isn't carried across into Shadow Of The Comet, a point-'n'-click adventure in which astronomer John Parker visits a distant village to photograph Halley's Comet, but instead uncovers something far more sinister.

Featuring a mixture of graphic styles, a moody sound track and a load of weird villagers who dislike any one "not from these parts", Shadow Of The Comet is a barely competent adventure featuring a variety of puzzles, most of which are (reasonably) logical but tough nevertheless.

Controlling Parker is an awkward task due to the game's clumsy interface which relies on a pull-down menu that is incredibly awkward to use. Unfortunately, this makes the game immensely frustrating to play, and what could have been an excellent adventure remains just mediocre.

Also included on Shadow Of The Comet CD is the Lovecraft museum, which has all sorts of memorabilia on display. What's more, Alone In The Dark also has a bonus game called Jack In The Dark. It's a short story in the style of AITD, placing you in control of a young girl chased by possessed dolls!

Even after all these years, Alone In The Dark is a atmospheric adventure which stands proud against many on the PC's recent releases. Shadow Of The Comet, on the other hand, is flawed and has been surpassed by more impressive adventures. It's for this reason this bundle falls somewhat short of the mark; a two-game compilation which only features one good title is something of a disappointment.

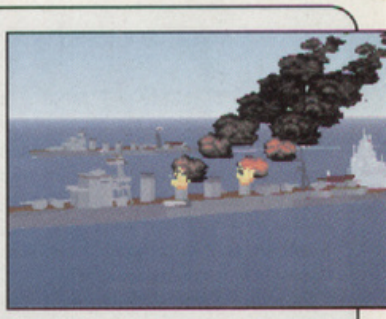
TELSTAR/INFOGRAMES
(0181) 878 7888
£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**
33MHz 386, 2Mb RAM, VGA and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**
Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Sound Source soundcards.

Overall 71%

Task Force 1942



Although it's getting on a bit, Task Force 1942 still ranks as the definitive simulation of surface naval combat in World War Two. If you're a keen strategist, if you liked Silent Service II and you wished that you could've had more control over the ships in Pacific Air War, then you'll love TF1942 — it's one of those rare games that you can get thoroughly lost in.

As its name suggests, TF1942 involves commanding a naval task force during the Pacific war and, like M1 Tank Platoon and any MicroProse flight sim that you care to mention, the game uses polygon graphics and bitmaps to recreate the action. While overall strategies are directed in the 2D chart room, each individual ship has a number of specific 3D views, including the bridge, the gunnery deck and, if your vessel is capable of firing them, the torpedo room.

Using these screens, you can see the action first-hand, and with a pair of handy binoculars strapped to the bulkhead, you can sight and target enemy ships, then sink them under a barrage of well-aimed shells. There's also a very useful 3D 'observer' or external view, which allows you to view your task group as if you were circling above it in a helicopter. It's here that you realise, if you haven't already, that the TF1942 graphics engine was the basis for the highly successful 1942: Pacific Air War game, and if you've played the Carrier Battles option in PAW, then the mechanics of moving your fleet around will be instantly familiar.

Of course, TF1942 wouldn't be complete without all the usual MicroProse options, and so not only does the game let you play historical battles (as either the Japanese or the Americans) but you can also create your own engagements and put your strategic skills to the ultimate test with the campaign option. The campaign itself is based on the Guadalcanal conflict and, in addition to setting up task groups and overseeing air patrols, you can either take overall command, sitting back and watching the events unfold, or you can elect to jump into any of your vessels when they encounter an enemy force, taking control of them personally.

Although it doesn't look too exciting, the depth of gameplay in TF1942 is immense. It's a shame that the level of detail here couldn't have been added to the carrier battles in PAW but I wouldn't be surprised, now that MicroProse are busily promoting their theatre-based brand lines, if an all-new, Gouraud-shaded, multimedia TF1942 appears before the year is out.

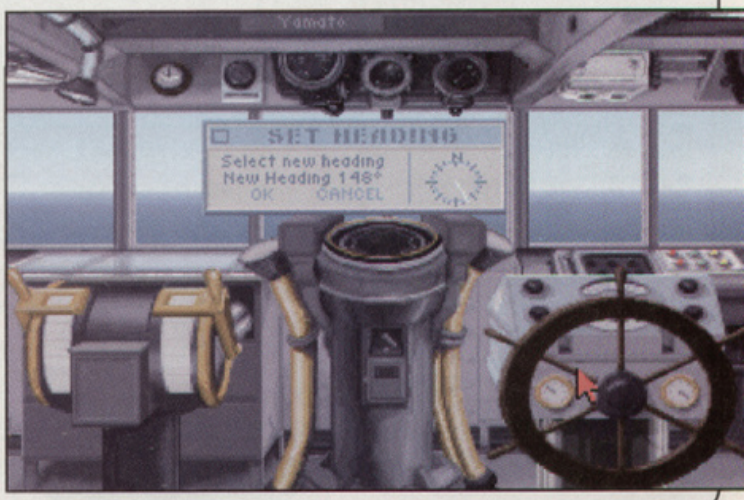
But as there are no plans as far as I'm aware, why not satisfy your strategy -lust (if you have one) with TF1942. Okay, the graphics are a bit bland and there's no multi-player option, but it's still a very playable game and, at its new budget price, an absolute bargain.

POWERPLUS/MICROPROSE
(01276) 684959
£16.99 OUT NOW

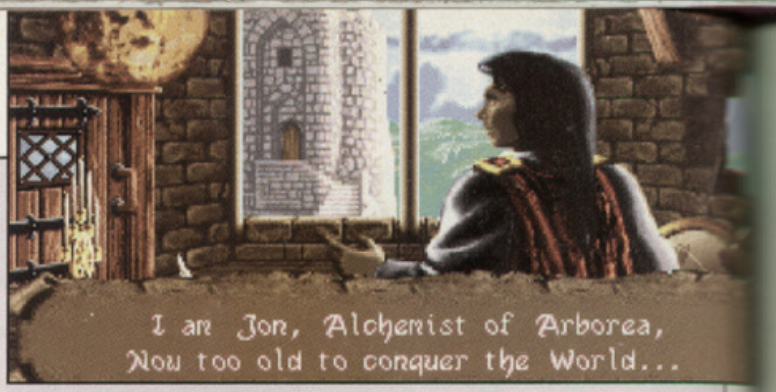
MINIMUM **SPEC**
25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 11Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**
Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 85%



Ishar 2: Messengers Of Doom



As you can probably see, Ishar 2 is game in the Dungeon Master mould — a first-person perspective, flick-screen scrolling, role-playing adventure with the customary cast list of humans, elves, dwarves and well-endowed serving wenches in low-cut sacking. It's a fairly traditional RPG, and although the game gives you a predetermined character rather than forcing you to spend hours generating strength and intelligence stats, a lot of time is spent recruiting fellow adventurers to help you on the many fantastical quests that are just queuing up to fall conveniently at your feet.

Thankfully, you don't have to be familiar with the first game to dive straight in and do the front-crawl with the sequel. Ishar 2 is a fairly big game, and there are seven islands to explore, puzzles to solve, creatures to fight and weird magical artefacts to be discovered. As I've said, it's very bog-standard RPG fare but while it's easy to understand, the inventory is fairly fiddly and the combat, which involves clicking on each character's weapon to initiate a hit, requires some serious dexterity with the mouse pointer.

All in all, Ishar 2 is very pretty and while it doesn't have a smooth-scrolling 3D view, the locations are nicely drawn. It's pleasant enough, but if you've already strutted your fantasy stuff with Ultima Underworld or the like, then Ishar 2 is neither technically excellent or fantastically addictive.

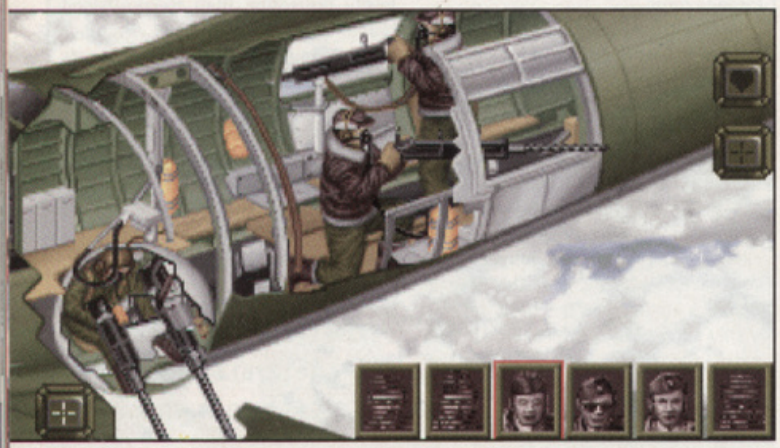
But having said that, the game is now on sale for the super-low price of £12.99, so if you're a fantasy loony and you missed the game the first time around then Ishar 2 might well be worth a look. It's a bit fiddly and it's not exactly state-of-the-art, but it's cheap, fairly cheerful and at least you'll get a good month or two of play out of it.

DAZE/SILMARILS
(0171) 372 7435
£12.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**
25MHz 386, VGA, 640K RAM, 3Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**
Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

Overall 73%



B-17

B-17 is the game that I thought would bore me to death this month. Somehow playing a game that involves flying a plane the size of a bungalow didn't exactly fill me with wild and unbounded enthusiasm.

But strangely B-17 is still on my hard disk and I can't quite explain why. It's a flight sim with a difference — compared to chasing Zeros over the Pacific or diving out of the sun towards squadrons of Heinkels, B-17 is a far more sedate affair. A B-17 Flying Fortress has a crew of 10 and it's up to you to guide your plane to the target, flitting between the turrets to take pot-shots at enemy fighters and sitting in the bombardier's position to line up the bombs. It doesn't look like it, but B-17 is very addictive indeed. The aircraft isn't a joy to fly, but that doesn't matter because most of your time is spent looking after the crew, allocating them different tasks in your attempt to complete the mission.

In the three years since B-17's original release, graphics haven't just come along in leaps and bounds, they've practically strapped on rocket packs and flown. But once you get involved with manning the gun turrets, aiming the bombs, fighting fires and using the radio, you tend to forget about the graphics anyway.

Granted, the gameplay isn't very varied and after a while the whole B-17 experience will start to pall, but if you're a sim fan you won't have flown anything quite this big before, and at this knock-down budget price I think you'll be pleasantly surprised by B-17.

POWERPLUS/MICROPROSE
(01276) 684959
£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**
25MHz 386, VGA, 640K RAM and 6Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**
Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 88%

Tornado

Although the bland dreariness of the polygon graphics make DI's Tornado simulator seem very dated, what it lacks in the way of flashy Gouraud-shaded visuals it more than makes up for with a hyper-realistic flight model, an in-depth campaign and probably the most detailed mission-planner you're ever likely to see.

Tornado is a hard-core simulation of the RAF's famous multi-role fighter bomber. The game lets you fly two versions of the aircraft, notably the GR4 Interdictor/Strike (IDS) and the F3 Air Defence Variant (ADV). At low-level the IDS is the fastest aircraft in the world, its unique terrain-following radar allowing it to skim effortlessly over the countryside, hugging hilltops and swooping down low to follow the contours of valleys. It's not surprise, then, that low-level strike missions make up a large proportion of the gameplay.

As you'd expect, Tornado has all the regular flight sim option, but the most impressive feature of the game is the Windows-style mission planner. This powerful utility allows you to designate your own targets and to have up to six Tornados flying at once. For example, in the campaign mode you can either send four aircraft to attack a target with two more flying air cover, or you can dispatch them in twos to attack multiple targets.

But even though the mission planner is awesomely impressive and the gameworld is very detailed, the very nature of the Tornado aircraft means that the game lacks the frantic dogfighting action of something like F-15 III or US Navy Fighters. The Tornado's primary role is that of a bomber and as such most of the missions involve staying undetected for as long as possible and running away at the slightest hint of danger. So, while you can't criticise Tornado as a flight sim, the plane sadly lacks the excitement and the agility of something like an F-16 interceptor.

All in all, although the explosions are weedy and the graphics are a shade dull, if you're looking for the ultimate sim of the Panavia Tornado, then this aptly named game is most definitely it. Better still, this new budget package also includes the Desert Storm data disk, which means that you can play the same great Tornado game but over a brown landscape instead of a green one. What more could you ask for, eh? Apart from Gouraud-shading that is... And better sound... Er, and...

ACTION 16/DIGITAL INT.
(01276) 684959
£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**
25MHz 386, VGA, 1Mb RAM, 11Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**
Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 82%

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DESERT RAID. Exciting adventure game.
CLYDES ADVENTURE. You must search for lost treasure.
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BODY COUNT. (20) Terrific fist fighting game.
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SIM SPACE. (2) Good space combat simulation game.
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BLAKE STONE & DUKEM II EXTRAS. Cheats and maps etc.
ASTRO WARS. Good asteroids game.
RANGER FOX. Good new shoot em up from Korea.
DOOM II not available as Shareware reg. version disk. £39.00. CD ROM £44.00
JAZZ JACK RABBIT. (2) Superb new game from EPIC. This even better than the well known Blue Hedgehod.
DOOM EXTRAS. Cheats and maps etc.
DOOM PATCH DISK TO VI. 1666. Cures the mouse problems and all other bugs. According to ID games.
DOOM FRONT END VI.31 & MULTILEVEL. File manager for Doom and extra levels etc.
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HALLOWEEN HARRY . Good platforom game.
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BIO MENACE. Save the world from mutant germs.
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HOKUS POKUS. (2) Brilliant new platform game.
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HERETIC. (2) Action packed fantasy blast by ID/ Raven. Developed with the Doom engine.
DESCENT. (2) Superb 3D Star Wars type shoot em up. Requires a fast 486 or Pentium.
RISE OF THE TRIADS. (4) Superb 8 level shareware version. This is better than Doom. 30 level disk registered version £32.00. Enhanced CD Rom version £39.00.
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SOUND EFFECTS VOC FILES. 15 files inc: Car start, nuclear explosion, gunfire, cannon fire, water drip, breaking glass etc.
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BEYOND 2000. A sample Mod file for Trackblaster. Also Death. Mod on which we have no info, and MID2MOD file converter.
SECOND REALITY. (2) THE BEST EVER DEMO.
CRYSTAL DREAMS DEMO. (2) Highly rated demo by Triton. Requires 2Mb of Ram.
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FORMGEN HOME FORMS COLLECTION.
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KWIK STAT. General statistics program.
625 BUSINESS LETTERS. For use in your word processor.
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HOUSEHOLD REGISTER. Keep track of your possessions for insurance purposes.
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PC FILE 7. (2) Superb database package.
PC CALC. (3) Superb CGA/EGA mono graphics.
FREEWAY CASHBOOK V4.6 (3).
WINCHECK. Cheque and savings account manager.
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NOYES ACCOUNTS V2.06. Excellent Accounts Package for small businesses.
PC TYPE 1V. (2) Major word processor.
WORD FUGUE. (2) Good word processor.
JORJ DICTIONARY. Good pop up dictionary of 58,000 words.
MULTI-LABELS FOR WINDOWS. Very good label maker for HP Laserjet.
CORTEX BUSINESS MANAGER. For Windows.
GALAXYLITE V1.7. Excellent Ram based word processor.
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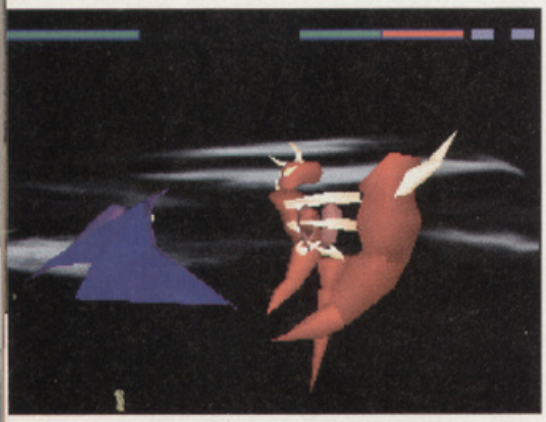
They're cheap, they're cheerful and they won't cost you an arm and a leg. **Once again Dean Evans looks through the round window at the glorious world of Shareware...**

Creep Clash/Sento

47-Tek

It's a shame, but with Mortal Kombat II about to hit the shelves and Super StreetFighter II, Super StreetFighter II Turbo, Warriors, Rise Of The Robots 2 and FX Fighter all poised to appear in the next few months, 47-Tek's new beat-'em-ups, Creep Clash and Sento, haven't exactly been greeted with rampant enthusiasm and wild, unbridled joy.

In fact, I hate beat-'em-ups. I hate them with a passion that I usually reserve for Blind Date, people who don't put the toilet seat down and that bloke who says "Echelente" in the Ferrero Rocher advert. Okay, I admit that I've got a bit of a soft spot for Virtua Fighter, but you can take all your two-dimensional StreetFighter Editions and you can shove them up your backside. Sideways. And that goes for Creep Clash and Sento too.



At first glance, both games look fairly impressive. They're both polygon-based, and if you've played Virtua Fighter in the arcades then you'll be familiar with slightly 3D nature of the fighting area. Specifically, Creep Clash is a fairly uninspiring beat-'em-up with ghouls, ghosts and giant bats, whereas Sento is a more traditional martial arts game with Ecstatica-style combatants wielding swords. Obviously, in the best traditions of complex beat-'em-up gameplay, the idea is to smash your opponent into a pulp but the action is slow, rather unresponsive and if you stare at the screen a little harder, the graphics really aren't that hot after all.

There's not really much you can say about a beat-'em-up. Both games have got all the usual special moves and combos, but they're nowhere near as impressive or as polished as some of the imminent commercial products. By all means, try them out if you come across them on the bulletin boards (although you'll need 8Mb of RAM to run both), but why throw good money at a substandard beat-'em-up when you can throw it at something like FX Fighter or Super StreetFighter II Turbo in a month or two. These games have got the fightin'-'n'-fumpin' market pretty much sewn up, and although I'm a fully paid-up beat-'em up loather, if you want the best gameplay, stick with the names you know.

● **Contact: Transend Services Ltd (01274) 622228.**

OVERALL 51%

Egyptian Chopper Force

Michael Henn

When you first load up Egyptian Chopper Force, the thing that strikes you most is that it hasn't really got that much in the way of gameplay. It's a Windows-based game and, using the mouse, you simply move your heavily-armed helicopter gunship around the left-hand side of the screen, shooting wildly at anything even remotely dangerous that appears on the right. That's really all there is to ECF and it will probably take about three minutes before you get bored and give up.

It's only when you click on QUIT to leave the game that the 'This game was created using Klik & Play' screen pops up and you realise that ECF shouldn't really get the savage critical hammering that it seems to thoroughly deserve. Although it's ridiculously basic, it's a prime example of the sort of stuff you can create with Europress' icon-driven game creator and, as an exercise in sprite movement, collision detection and background artwork, it's a competent and very enthusiastic effort.

The biggest problem with ECF is that it's so simple. Even though there's nothing radically wrong here (apart from the glaring lack of exciting gameplay), ECF isn't something that you can while away the hours with. In fact, you'll be lucky if you can stick with it for more than a few minutes! However, if you've got Klik & Play and want an example of basic shoot-'em-up mechanics, you can do far worse than take a look at this one. If you haven't got Europress' game creator, it might just strangle your programming aspirations...

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OVERALL N/A

Essential Shareware...

1. Heretic

Id Software

Hailed as Doom with crossbows, Heretic is the fantasy equivalent of Id Software's superb shoot-'em-up. Developed by Raven Software, you must battle against hordes of red bat things, ogres and spectres. With the ability to look up and down, multi-player options and nine monster-packed levels, this is a must for any self-respecting Doom fan.

2. Descent

Interplay

Interplay do the Doom thing but in a spaceship. Dive into the bowels of disused mines, battle the robotic guardians, destroy the reactor and escape before the whole thing goes kaboom. Superb 3D texture-mapped graphics, great sound, a wealth of kick-ass weaponry and it's even got multi-player options so you can waste your friends. Absolutely brilliant.

3. Doom

Id Software

The original and some say still the best 3D game around. Doom is a fast-paced shoot-'em up with some of the toughest, bloodiest action you're ever likely to come across on the PC. Rumble with the machine gun or just vapourize Cacodemons with the rocket launcher as you charge through nine demon-infested levels. And if you've not played Deathmatch Doom, you've never lived...

4. Jazz Jackrabbit

Epic Megagames

Sod Sega, this is as close as you'll get to playing Sonic The Hedgehog on the PC. Jazz Jackrabbit is the fastest platformer around so forget about Zool and Soccer Kid, because this Epic Megagames ledge-leaper beats 'em all hands down. With fabulous graphics and fantastic sound effects, Jazz Jackrabbit is an arcade essential.

5. One Must Fall

Epic Megagames

There aren't many good beat-'em-ups around, but One Must Fall is an example of how to do it right. You'll need at least a 33MHz 486 to get the best out of it and if Rise Of The Robots was a bit too pricey for your liking, OMF with its wrestling robots and electrified arena, is a cheap and very playable alternative. Fun, if you like that sort of thing...

less than a Fiver

Body Count

Capstone

It's no surprise to learn that while Id Software is enjoying great success with its superb Doom 3D engine, it's had no qualms about licensing the old Wolfenstein 3D technology out to independent software developers. Just one look at Body Count tells you that Capstone was probably right up near the front of the queue, because this is a fairly uninspiring Wolfenstein clone with none of the flair or the imagination of the original.

If you've played Doom, then the 'run about shooting a variety of increasingly violent enemies, solving basic puzzles and picking up bigger guns' gameplay will be instantly familiar. The keys are the same as Doom too, i.e. you use the cursors to guide your character around, the CTRL key to fire and the ALT button to strafe.

As for the plot (as if a game like this really needs one), it seems that terrorists have overrun the United Nations building and, as a member of an elite UN commando force, it's up to you to infiltrate the 40-storey skyscraper to blow the crap out of any no-good, steroid-pumped terrorist that happens to wander into your gunsights.

Unfortunately, the main problem with Body Count is that after you've blasted your way through Doom, Doom II, Rise Of The Triad and Heretic, the low-resolution, thinly-detailed graphics can't and don't hold your attention for very long. In fact, with the basic 3D engine and the clunky, almost laughable animation, Capstone's flirtation with the 3D shoot-'em-up genre is neither original or exciting.

Having said that Body Count is still quite playable, but no matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't get enthusiastic about it at all. Perhaps after playing the likes of Doom and Heretic I've been spoiled by slick 3D graphics, good animation and a funky soundtrack. If there's one thing to be learnt from Body Count, it's that it shows just how good the Doom 3D engine actually is. In all honesty, there's really no point playing low-resolution games like Dr Radiaki and Body Count when you can play the vastly superior Heretic, System Shock and Dark Forces.

● **Contact: Transend Services Ltd (01274) 622228.**

OVERALL 65%

Vinyl Goddesses

Union Logic

"In the year 200 billion, a small ship races across the galaxy taking The Vinyl Goddess From Mars to the esteemed intergalactic B-Movie convention..." Yes, I know this all sounds very silly, but when have plots ever been important in platform games? All you really need to know about the rest of the so-called plot is that the heroine's ship crash lands and that she has to run through various platform-filled worlds to find her ship and escape.

Vinyl Goddesses is a simple and rather traditional platform game, and if you're a keen shareware fan you'll soon realise it's a bit like the old Epic ledge-leaper, Jill Of The Jungle. In fact, it looks uncannily like JOTJ. Even the basic gameplay, i.e run around, shoot aliens, jump platforms, collect spinny bonus things, etc, is exactly the same. Obviously this similarity isn't necessarily a bad thing, and while full-price platform games like Superfrog and Zool 2 appear and then nose-dive spectacularly at retail, shareware efforts like Jazz Jackrabbit prove that cut-price software *can* compete with the big time boys.

However, unlike Jill Of The Jungle, Vinyl Goddesses doesn't have quite the same slick feel to it. It's a playable game, certainly, and the platform-jumping action, puzzle-solving and alien-bashing will keep you occupied for a while. But compared to something like Jazz Jackrabbit (still the best Sonic-style platform game on the PC), Vinyl Goddesses is distinctly average and the less said about the dodgy woman in the tight red leather bikini on the title screen the better.

● **Contact: Transend Services Ltd (01274) 622228.**

OVERALL 73%

Where can I get this lovely **Shareware?**

If you're on the look-out for Shareware, here's a list of just some of the friendly and helpful Shareware libraries that you might like to try. Why not ask them to send you a catalogue of their games, or alternatively check this very magazine for adverts.

Transend Services Ltd
(01274) 622228
Testware UK Ltd
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(01702) 466933

Note that Shareware libraries often charge different prices for the same games, so try to shop around to find the best deal.

Also, remember that you'll usually pay by the disk, not by the individual game. This means that if one disk costs, say, £2 then a game like Raptor (which comes on a total of three disks) will set you back £6. Postage & Packing is normally included and, if it isn't, go somewhere where it is.

If you've got a modem, why not try giving the following BBS systems a call. Initial on-line time is free but for more access most systems will charge you a small annual subscription fee.

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These games are also available on Compuserve and the Internet.

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Minimum specs: 25MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

Premier Manager 3

Gremlin Interactive — Available on both HD & CD!

The incredible Premier Manager success story shows no signs of stopping in this, the series' third and finest incarnation. We gave it 91% in our April 1995 Issue and stated: "Premier Manager 3 is a superb game that will keep you occupied for months."

Minimum specs: 25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and mouse.

Jungle Strike

Gremlin Interactive — Available on both HD & CD!

Take to the skies — and the ground too this time! — in the excellent sequel to the massively-successful Desert Strike. You'll need brains as well as brawn to defeat the evil terrorist plot to nuke the United States. In the May 1995 Issue we proclaimed it "one of the most captivating blasts of late" and awarded it a more-than-healthy 81%!

Minimum specs: 33MHz 386, VGA and 2Mb RAM.

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Bring home all the excitement of the arcades with this excellent simulation of the noble art of pinball. As we said in our April 1995 Issue when we awarded it 90%, Psycho Pinball is "immensely addictive" and "simply the best 'pinny' game on the PC".

Minimum specs: 25MHz 386, VGA and 4 Mb RAM.

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Issue 4

Id Software finally unveiled Doom 2: Hell On Earth, and we were right there to witness the birth. In addition, System Shock reared its not-unattractive head, as did Colonization, Heimdall 2 and PGA Tour 486. There were great previews of Ecstatica, Retribution and Dark Forces and our disks were graced by the presence of Wacky Wheels and Transport Tycoon.

Issue 5

In our first CD issue, we took a long hard look at Magic Carpet, Little Big Adventure, Transport Tycoon and Aces Of The Deep. And, if that wasn't enough, we previewed Loadstar, Cadillacs & Dinosaurs and DID's fab, new Chopper game called, er, Chopper. On the disk we had The Clue! and on the CD there was a cornucopia of demos including Retribution and Little Big Adventure.

Issue 6

In Issue 6 we sank our teeth into Ecstatica, took to the skies with Dawn Patrol and US Navy Fighters and fumbled our way through Kyrandia 3: Malcom's Revenge. We also previewed every game that's coming your way in '95 and on the disks and the CD we featured Flight of the Amazon Queen, Novastorm, NASCAR Racing, Magic Carpet and Cyberwar. Woooo!

Issue 7

You missed Issue 7? How could you? We had the first review of Origin's Wing Commander 3, featured the very weird Commander Blood and finally got to grips with Rise Of The Robots. We also took an exclusive peek at 3D-Ware, a brand new game creator, previewed Alone 3 and Dungeon Master 2, while on the disks we featured Bullfrog's Tube and 450Mb of The Making Of Wing 3!

Issue 8

Id Software proved that they are the blast-fest kings with Heretic, Doom in tights. Not only could you play the Heretic demo but we gave you the full review, as well as cynical analysis of Alone 3, KA-50 Hokum and EarthSiege. We also peeked at UFO 2, Sim Isle and Frontier 2. And disks? Or disc? Well, we had Heretic, US Navy Fighters and Descent to keep you all happy...

Issue 9

UFO: Terror From The Deep rose from the depths to grace our front covet. "It's wet and it's wild!" screamed the coverline — and for once it wasn't wrong. Also wild (if not so wet) were Discworld, Psycho Pinball and Descent. On the discs there were smart demos of UFO: TFTD and Premier Manager 3, while on CD we also had Dark Forces, Alone 3 and Wings Of Glory.

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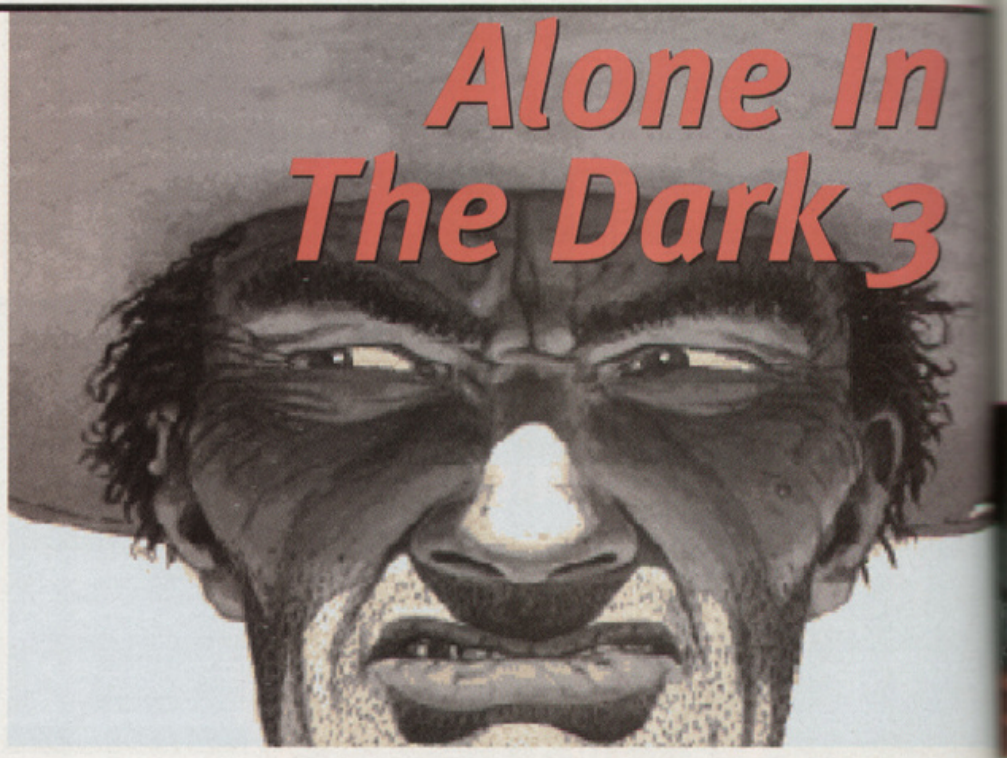
POWER UP

This month's tip-fest not only includes a solution for Westwood Studio's Kyrandia 3, but also hints for Lords Of The Realm, Warcraft and Origin's multi-million dollar movie-style experience, Wing Commander 3. But first, how about a friendly walk-through for...

Carnby never learns. Don't go down into the cellar, don't talk to strange creatures and don't, whatever you do, ever stand alone in the dark. Especially not for a third time...



Alone In The Dark 3

Walk over the bridge and take the gas can near the swing doors. Enter the Saloon. Use the gas can on the generating set to see a clip of 'The Last Ranger'. Take the oil can from the corner, the maraca from the stage, the key from table and the box of matches near the bar. Dodge the bullets from the zombie upstairs, then search the shelves for the wood alcohol, a bottle, and a flask.

Next, go to the animal skull and push down the left horn. The trap door will open and a cowboy will appear brandishing two guns. Hide behind the skull to avoid the bullets because when he's used up all his ammo, he's much easier to kill. When he finally sinks into the floor and his demon leaps skywards, pick up the Ace of Diamonds and the gold bullet. Then go down the trap door and get the lamp.

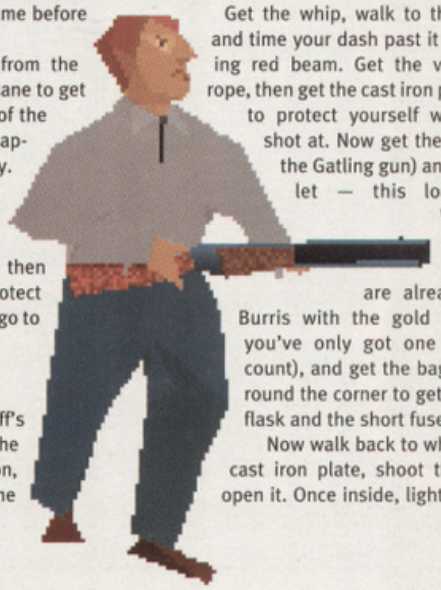
Don't Go Down Into The Cellar

Use the oil can to fill the lamp, then use matches to light it. Go to the other end of the room, get the cane and search the poster for a note from 'Lefty'. Go to the door of the nearest barrel (the one nearest to the poster) and open the door. Step away from the door and use the maraca to lure the snakes out. Now walk to the end of the barrel and save the game before you climb up.

In the jail, quickly get the stone from the bench, and go to the cell door. Use the cane to get the keys and then use them to get out of the cell — if you kill the cowboy, he just reappears a little later, so you'll have to hurry. Throw the stone to turn it into an Indian amulet, then go to the other end of the corridor and enter the room. Drop the wood alcohol to get rid of 'Lefty', and then take the flask. The Indian amulet will protect you from the pentagram on the floor, so go to the room to the right.

I Shot The Sheriff

In The Sheriff's office get the Sheriff's badge and the Winchester bullets from the desk. Search the posters for information, use the key from the Saloon to unlock the gun case and pick up the Winchester. Go down the side corridor to the front of the jail and push the nearby closet in front of the double doors — this is to stop a zombie breaking them down and also to reveal a rope ladder. Search the closet to find a shotgun.



The Man With The Golden Bullet

Get the whip, walk to the hovering block, and time your dash past it to avoid the flashing red beam. Get the voodoo hangman's rope, then get the cast iron plate. Use the plate to protect yourself when you're being shot at. Now get the cartridge belt (for the Gatling gun) and use the gold bullet — this loads it into the Winchester, unfortunately replacing any bullets that are already inside. Shoot Burris with the gold bullet (remember you've only got one shot so make it count), and get the bag of scorpions. Nip round the corner to get the Gatling gun, a flask and the short fuse.

Now walk back to where you found the cast iron plate, shoot the door and then open it. Once inside, light the lamp and use the voodoo hangman's rope. Drop the bag of scorpions down through the trapdoor and then push the lever to close it, allowing you to search the corner to get the dynamite and the piece of dried meat.

After killing the two bad guys, return to the barrel. When you get close to it, the door will shut and someone will try to shoot you through the door. Use the short fuse to make the dynamite stick and then use it in the largest crack in the wall (the one that's nearest the barrel). Use the matches to light it and then take cover as quickly as possible! After the explosion, go through the hole.

A Hole New World

Step on the arrow symbol to open the passageway (otherwise you will have to fight a guy with a knife) and keep walking until you meet another zombie cowboy. After you've disposed of him, walk to the mechanism and use the Sheriff's badge to fix it. Next, use the whip to pull the lever which opens the door. Go through the door and pick up the flask and the bullets that lie on the plank. Run to the end of the plank and you should end up on the first floor of the saloon.

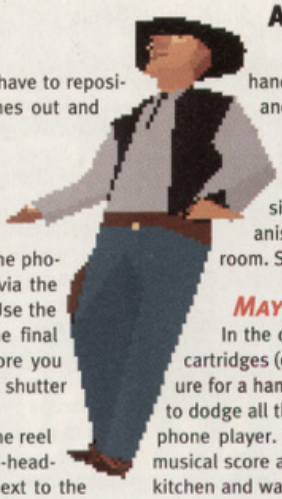
Make Mine A Sarsaparilla

On the saloon landing, light the two lamps nearest the broken window. One will open a door, while the other will give you a message. Retrace your steps and go through the open door. When

the vulture squawks and the ghost of the Arizona Kid appears, use the piece of dried meat on the clock. If you do this correctly, you should be given a token. You will need the night valet from here and, before you leave the room, get the flask in the corner by the painting. Finally go through the painting.

In the large bedroom, search the dressing table for a 30/30 bullet, a bulb and a pearl. Push the mirror to reveal a key and then search the bed for an arrow, which you use on the cupid figure on the bedpost. Go back through the painting and back to the landing. Pick up the ring near the hole in the floor and use it to separate the ring from the diamond. Use the key that you found on the dressing table to open the door nearest the hole.

In the small bedroom, get the diary, the instruction sheet and the flask from the floor. Bump into the dragon figure on the stand beside the bed to get a close up view. Use the diamond from the ring to get some Winchester bullets and then go out onto the ledge. Edge along to the open window shutter and put the night valet in front of it. Take care here — you may have to reposition it before the bad guy finally comes out and falls to his death.



Flash! Ah-ahhhh!

Nip into the dark room and pick up the shutter release, the instruction sheet, the flash and the key. Look at the photographs on the wall and then leave via the window to head back to the landing. Use the key from the dark room to unlock the final door by the broken window and, before you enter the room, use the bulb and the shutter release to make a flash.

When the flash is ready, use it on the reel of film on the floor to get rid of the two-headed zombie. Get the oil can that lies next to the piano, use the token in the piano to get some music and then shoot the target to open it. Grab the flask and the war stick from inside and the block should move to reveal a hole in the floor.

The Platform Jumping Bit

Jump down the hole into the cave and use the oil can, the matches and the lamp again. Walk to the next cave and before you attempt the block jump, save your game — in fact, save the game after each jump. Anyway, jump over the blocks until you reach the Indian shaman. Use the war stick and he'll walk back to let you pass. In the centre of the platform is a box of cartridges and a small key. Pick them up and keep jumping until you reach the block with a symbol on it. Then jump to the block on the right of the screen and then back to the block with the symbol. Keep on jumping until you reach a block that hasn't risen up and where you can't go further. Use the Indian amulet and you will be helped across.

In the mansion, kill the two bad guys and grab the flask, the top hat and the key. The cask of silver salts will be used later, so forget about it for now and nip along to the doors at the other end of the room, which the key that you've just picked up should open.

Shhh! This Is A Library

When you're in the library, search the shelves for the following books: a white book, a watchmaker's manual, and a locked book about Navajo traditions — this can be opened with the small key given to you by the Indian. Get the pocket watch from the bust and use the printing plate in front of the mirror to read it. Finally, go back and through the doors near the cask of silver salts.

This is the entrance to the study and you should use the pocket watch to unlock the doors. Enter the room to meet Morrison, who'll give you a storyboard, and then use the top hat on the bust of Abraham Lincoln to get some more cartridges. After you've done this,a bad guy will appear to pull back the curtains on a stained glass window, while another will attack Morrison. After killing the zombie, shoot the window and jump out of it.

Boot Hill

You're now in the graveyard, so use the war stick on the round, stone object in the centre. There is a vault in the far corner of the screen but the entrance is too low for you to enter. Leave this, go to the grave marked O.E.J (One-Eyed Jack) and use the Ace of Diamonds on the right hand side of the grave. Get the message and ride the pillar up to the kitchen.

Get the oil can from the table, the roll of film from the floor and the bag of pemmican from the strange-looking sideboard. Use the oil can on the mechanism in the fireplace to reveal another room. Scared yet?

May I Have This Dance

In the dance room, search the lady figure for cartridges (excuse me ,madam...) and the male figure for a hammer. When the revellers open fire, try to dodge all the bullets and run towards the gramophone player. There you will find a guitar string, a musical score and the key to a safe. Go back into the kitchen and walk behind the huge sideboard into the next room. Use the 30/30 bullet and the hammer to get through into the dressing room.

Search the dressing table for a blasting cap, a map and a light bulb, then go to the mounting table in the next room. Use the guitar string, the light bulb and then the roll of film. Finally, use the musical score on the mounting table to reveal a numerical combination, namely 806.

In the bank, pick up the astronomy book and search the picture. Keep on searching until the combination becomes 806 and then walk behind the counter. Go up to the large safe, use the pearl and then the key to open it. Kill the zombie for the amulet and get the suitcase (it contains cartridges) and Hill Century's money. The money is booby-trapped so don't bother trying to open it, just open the window to get to the next part of the game.

The Indiana Jones Mine Cart Bit

Get the message from Jed Stone by walking up to McCarthy. Get the flask from the saddle and search the mine cart for the detonator box and some more cartridges. Use the cart to ride past the bad guys and when the mine cart eventually stops, enter the nearest open door.

Quickly push the large 'STATION' sign. The blue bucket of paint will spoil it and the station master in the rafters will cry. Get the key and search the rails by the sign for an eye-bolt. Go to the corner by the door and use the eye-bolt to ring the bell three times. The door will rise once slowly and then three times quickly, so time your dash past it carefully.

Outside, put the blasting cap next to the fence and use the detonator box. Now go to the water tank opposite the station, put

the suitcase and the key in front of the tank and get merrily killed by the Elwood brothers. Don't panic — there's nothing you can do about it.

Death Becomes You

When you're reincarnated as a cougar, quickly leave the vault and go to the saloon. Run up the broken stairs onto the first floor. Jump the hole and run towards the broken window. When you get to the jail roof, run to the large gap in the wall, i.e. the one that you can see the statue through. Run to the edge, jump onto the statue and go between where you saw McCarthy and the bank. Search the barrel of tar to get a sticky paw and then go to the cask of silver salts. Search the cask to coat your claw with silver, before heading back towards the area between the saloon and the graveyard. Kill the werewolf, enter the graveyard and kill the second werewolf that you find there. Finally go back to the vault and drop the eagle nugget on the fire.

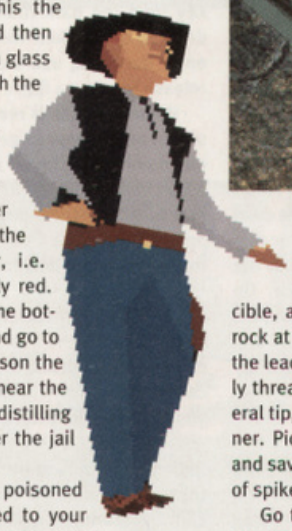
Back To Life, Back To Reality

When you come to, grab the Colt 45 and a bar of soap from behind the grave. Go back to the water tank again to meet your double. To defeat him, drop the Colt on the floor and then walk up to your double. Your two selves will merge in an electrical lightshow and, once you've got your cowboy hat on, pick up the Colt again. Now climb the ladder and go down inside the tank. Use the soap to get rid of the bad guy, get the metallic brush that he leaves behind and the flask near the wall. Use the brush in the large peg with the hole to open up a trap door.

Jump down the trap door and walk along the passage to the next area. Pick up the dead leaf and put it in the Indian bust. Look at the map on the wall and get the notebook in the corner. Next, climb the rungs up to the sleeping quarters and quickly take the axe from the bed. Use the axe to kill the bad guys and then pick up the flask.

I Get The Point

Cross over the pit of spikes, kill the bad guy with the pick axe and then walk through to the next room. In the library, dispose of yet another bloody zombie and then collect the scorched book, the candlestick, the water pitcher and the needle. The locked door in this room opens when the candlestick is removed, so gather your belongings and head down the passage to the next area. Here, go up to the rifle-bearing zombie and use the water pitcher to give him a well-deserved drink. After you've done this the doors will open, so take and then throw the piggy bank to get a glass microscope plate. Finally, push the lever to go up.



Walk out of the lift and use the glass plate under the microscope. The colour of the blobs on the slide is the order in which you have to push the switches to open the door, i.e. grey, green, blue, then finally red. But before you do this, take the bottle of poison from the table and go to the cell. Use the bottle to poison the needle, then go to the table near the cell. Once you've found the distilling coil, use the poison and enter the jail cell.

Kill the doctor with the poisoned needle (when you've returned to your normal size) and when he's dead, get the piece of straw, the key and the bottle of ammonia. Leave the jail and then use the poison with the distilling coil again. This time, however, go through the small hole in the wall below the table. Use the straw to pole vault across the gap, and get the potion on the other side — but be quick before the shrinking effect wears off.

Spiderman, Spiderman...

Use the potion to spike the spider guy's drink and then get out of his way. Once the threat is reduced, squash him and get the pot of glue. Although you can see what is going on in the next room by opening the eye shape, you'll get shot at by Jed Stone if you do. So, use the pot of glue to get your hands sticky, then climb up to where there is a shaft of light. By the way, unless you really enjoy a challenge, now would be a good time to SAVE your game.

The aim of the next part of the game is to get Hammer's head, but Hammer's body may be rather quick, so you'll have to rush around a few times before you manage to get his head. After this, you may find that you have to run around before you even get the chance to throw his head down the hole.

Alternatively, you may be able to push the anvil so that it blocks Hammer's body, which allows you to get his head in safety. However you eventually do it, when Hammer is gone, get the lead ingot from the anvil, the flask and the Winchester.

Now Cobra appears and it's probably easiest to kill him using the Winchester. When he dies, he leaves his wig and a silver dollar. There is also a flask in the corner, so take it and then search the poster to find a tiny slot. Use the silver dollar in the slot and go down to get the box of matches before entering the next room.

Freeing Emily

Jed Stone will run off when he sees you and to free Emily you must go over to the crucible, avoiding the skull pattern and the radioactive rock at the top of the skull shape. At the crucible, use the lead ingot and the matches to neutralise the deadly threat. The lead becomes an evil wand with a mineral tip, so grab both it and the ammunition in the corner. Pick up the scorched paper and the parchment and save the game again before you get to the next set of spikes.

Go through the doorway and when the game lets you move again, step back from the door and throw the bottle of ammonia at it. This should wake Emily. When the bad guy has been dispatched, he leaves a knife that you'll need later. Go to the door with the spikes and use Cobra's wig to pull the switch above it. You may need the flask here and it's a good idea to save the game before opening the door.

The Exciting Denouement

Quickly run to the large eagle totem and use the wand in front of it. Jed Stone (now in the suit of bullet-resistant armour) won't follow you in the totem area, so go to the tap by the ditch and open it, filling the ditch with water. Then, get the rubber glove from the corner and use both it and the knife to cut the cables near the machinery. Once you have done this, go back into the totem area and wait for Jed to, literally, put his foot in it.

When Emily has opened the door, get the sack of coal near the totem area and go through the doorway. Climb onto the train and use the coal and the matches before pushing the lever to start the ending. All you now have to do is sit back, listen to the music and watch the credits roll.

PC GAMES is hugely indebted to Mr C.M. Lee of Walthamstow in London, who will shortly be receiving something nice for his trouble. Nice one, Mr Lee.

Whether ye be orc or human, Interplay's fantasy wargame is a tough 'un. So here, from the quivering lips of Blizzard, are ten top-quality tip-type t'ings.

(1) Alright, we admit that the following piece of advice is a little on the obvious side, but we thought that we'd give it to you anyway. Suffice it to say, it pays to upgrade your units as soon as you possibly can. A wise player will try to upgrade his shields first, because their defensive power affects a wider range of units than any other upgrade.

(2) Remember: this is war, laddy (thanks for the quote, Paladin), so don't be ashamed if you have to use the tactics of a cowardly bully. Always gang up on enemy units, even in an evenly-matched battle. Whenever possible, make your army of units attack and kill one enemy at a time. That way you can always be sure of victory.

(3) Careful town planning is an absolute must if you want to succeed. Don't cram all your buildings together in a tight little huddle, or your none-too-bright units will tend to get stuck in the narrow cobbled streets. But don't go expansion mad — try to keep road building down to a minimum if at all possible. Although each road section only costs a measly 8 pieces of gold, remember that that's the same cost as a grunt or a peon.

(4) Never, but NEVER, construct a building in between your Town Hall and your gold mine — it only slows down the prospecting peons. The faster your peons can move, the quicker your economic resources will build up.

(5) Spearmen (or Archers, as their equivalents are called if you're playing as the puny humans) make the best scouts because they have the longest visual range of all your units. When these units stop moving, a large area of the map will suddenly become visible. If you send a few scouts out in all directions you'll have uncovered the darkened landscape's hidden secrets in no time.

(6) When using catapults to defend your town, build a wall completely around them to try and thwart enemy attacks. After all, those giant rock-lobbers cost enough to build, so you might as well do your best to look after them...

(7) When launching an attack on the enemy's stronghold, the best way to bring him to his knees in double-quick time is to disrupt his vital supply source. Should you stumble across an enemy-controlled peon, hit him once to disrupt his orders and then go and seek out another peon to hassle. Don't bother running after those fleeing peons and trying to kill them — it's of secondary priority to stopping the enemy's economic flow, and there will be plenty of time for leisurely peasant bashing later on.

(8) Always keep your enemy guessing. If he hasn't found your town but you've found his, then attack from a wide variety of angles — this will keep him from guessing precisely where you are. After all, if you constantly attack from the north-east, then it's a pretty sure bet that that's where your town is.

(9) An excellent and very effective defensive phalanx is a group of upgraded archer positioned in front of a catapult. This stops any ranged attackers from damaging the war machine, and also brings your strongest ranged units into play. Clever, eh?

(10) Bear in mind that no strategy, no matter how cunning or devious, is totally fool-proof. By learning what your enemy tends to do, you can always devise a counter strategy to beat it. If there's one skill that anyone wishing to become a true master in the ways of Warcraft needs in abundance, it's flexibility. Here endeth the first ten lessons...

I Want It All!

So, you want all the spells, loads of cash and super warriors, but you don't want to have to work for it? As they say at a popular fast food chain, you got it. Just hit RETURN to send a message, then enter CORWIN OF AMBER. If you see a message on-screen saying "Oo you cheating wascally wabbit!", then you'll know the cheat mode is activated.

Now hit RETURN to send another message, and this time enter the following funny phrases for a wide assortment of phenomenally beneficial effects...

POT OF GOLD	*Awards you loads of cash.*
EYE OF NEWT	*Gives you all the spells.*
IRON FORGE	*Gives you highest spec weapons and armour.*
SALLY SHEARS	*Reveals the whole map.*
THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE	*Turns your units into one-hit-and-they're-down super troopers.*

ALERT!
These tips give away some of Wing 3's major plot twists! You have been warned...

Wing Commander 3

Modern life may be rubbish, but it's worse in the future. So relieve tense headaches with this plethora of combat tips...

The Path To Victory

Wing Commander 3 has numerous endings, decided upon by choices made throughout the game. Ultimately the war against the Kilrathi is either won or lost, but there are a couple of key missions to look out for, to prevent yourself from falling into the downward spiral leading to failure.

If, upon returning to the Victory, Rollins greets you with a stern face and admits that the Confederation is losing the war and is retreating to Proxima, quit the game and replay the mission until you successfully complete it. If you don't you'll find it difficult — nay, *impossible* — to clamber back onto the winning path and the game will end with the Kilrathi assault on Earth.

Your Arsenal

Engaging Kilrathi ships equipped with missiles is often difficult, as more often than not rockets must be destroyed before they strike their target. The key to eliminating missile threats is to close in on them without actually engaging the enemy. This is best done by ordering a wing-man to break and attack, assigning him to the Kilrathi fighters while you concentrate on the missiles.

Keep a constant eye on your radar as this displays any missiles as yellow crosses. Target individual rockets with your computer, switch to cannons and kick in the afterburner. The extra boost of speed allows you to match the velocity of the rocket and engage it with relative ease. Attacking with missiles is useless, as the target is too small to lock on to.

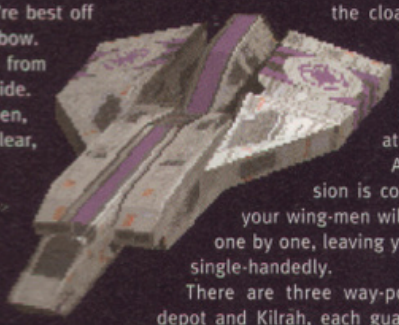
By far the most lethal Kilrathi weapon is the Skipper missile, which is equipped with a cloaking device and is therefore extremely difficult to target. However, the missile is slower than most others, and decloaks while maintaining a lock on its target. All light fighters equipped with afterburners can outrun the Skipper and, providing they use the radar to locate the missile, it shouldn't be too difficult to destroy.

The Right Craft

Picking the right ship for the mission ahead is absolutely vital, as is correctly selecting the payload they carry. Rachel will happily equip the craft with a default payload providing hunky Blair plays along with her sexual desires, but check the loading bay yourself because her selection is not always perfect. The fast and agile Arrow fighter is easily the best ship for dogfighting, but for

engaging the huge Capital ships you're best off opting for the slow-but-powerful Longbow.

Incidentally, attack Capital ships from the rear as this is often their weakest side. Concentrate on the gun turrets then, when your attack run is relatively clear, close in for the kill, lasers blazing.



Challenging Flash

Challenge Flash to a dogfight in the simulator and you'll find he's a highly-skilled pilot with only one weakness. Attacking with lasers is a no-go-zone, so switch to missiles and fire off a couple — he may be good, but he can't dodge these babies!

Thrakath's Ploy

Thrakath will taunt you after the planet-shattering Behemoth has been eliminated. Don't be fooled by this ploy to strand you in deep space — just return to the Victory. That said, it is possible to destroy Thrakath's ship with a volley of missiles, using the afterburners to quickly reach his position and soar back to the Victory before it hyper-jumps outta there.

Cheats *Always* Prosper!

Fancy cheating? Well you can (to some extent) by accessing Wing 3's options screen — just press ALT and O together at any time during a mission to bring it up. This screen allows you to toggle invulnerability on and off, as well as play around with a host of other variables.

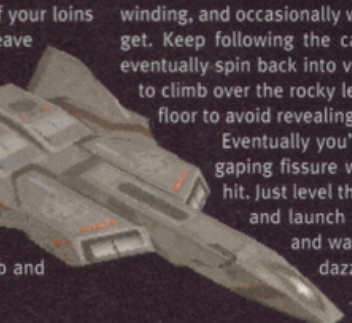
Ground-Breaking

Compared to space dogfights, surface combat is a completely different ball game because there's that big, flat sheet of rock they call ground to take into a account. The one rule to remember is not to fly too high or too low — leave the planet atmosphere and the mission automatically aborts, while hugging the ground can seriously damage your hull. That said, it's vital to keep low to avoid anti-aircraft fire. Ground targets are picked out as orange blips on the radar and most are easily destroyed using lasers.

The Final Assault

Up to four wing-men can be chosen to take part in the final, fateful raid against Kilrah, one of which is you (obviously). Choose carefully — and if your loins have been stirred by the delectable Flint, leave her back on the Victory.

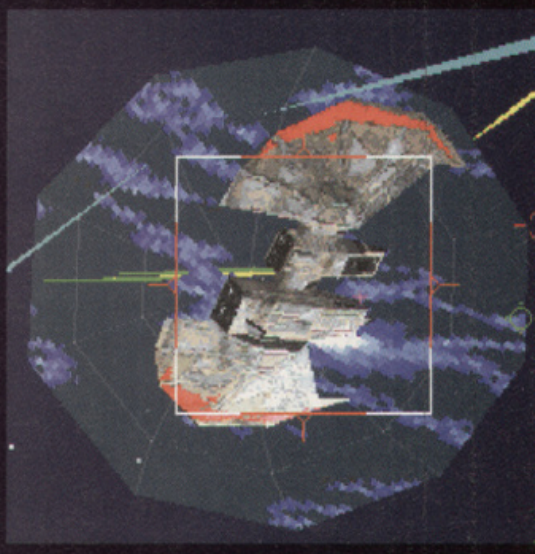
As the first mission is long, it is divided into phases, and therefore it's possible to save the game at each interval. The first phase is an assault on a refuelling depot in the Kilrah system, while the second mission objective is to retrieve the T-bomb and the cloaking device. Phase 3 is the orbital attack on Kilrah — the planet's atmosphere is swarming with Kilrathi fighters attacking in waves.



As each phase of the mission is completed, you'll find that your wing-men will mysteriously disappear one by one, leaving you to tackle the final run single-handedly.

There are three way-points between the final depot and Kilrah, each guarded by Kilrathi fighters and a single Capital ship. For the time being, leave the Capital ships alone and concentrate on the fighters, as this should prevent you from sustaining too much damage before you reach the next nav-point.

At the third nav-point, clear the area of Kilrathi presence (or as much as possible, anyway) and engage the Cloaking Device (CTRL-C) *before* switching over to autopilot and heading for Kilrah. Fail to engage the Cloaking Device before activating the autopilot and you'll be confronted by a never-ending stream of Kilrathi fighters which prevent the mission from being successfully completed. Also remember to keep your distance during cloaking to avoid incoming flak from any remaining Capital ships.



Arriving in orbit around Kilrah under cloak, you'll find Hobbes, Thrakath and two Paktahn defenders awaiting your arrival. Remaining cloaked, leave the Paktahn alone (even if you destroy them they're replaced by another two) and close in on Hobbes or Thrakath. Deactivate the cloak and engage Hobbes first, as he proves tougher than Thrakath. A couple of close-range missiles will quickly eliminate Hobbes, allowing you to turn your attention to the Kilrathi champion.

On the surface of Kilrah, destroy the tanks patrolling the buildings on the ground. Duck down and fly along the canyon, as otherwise defence fighters will engage your ship as soon as you pop out into the open.

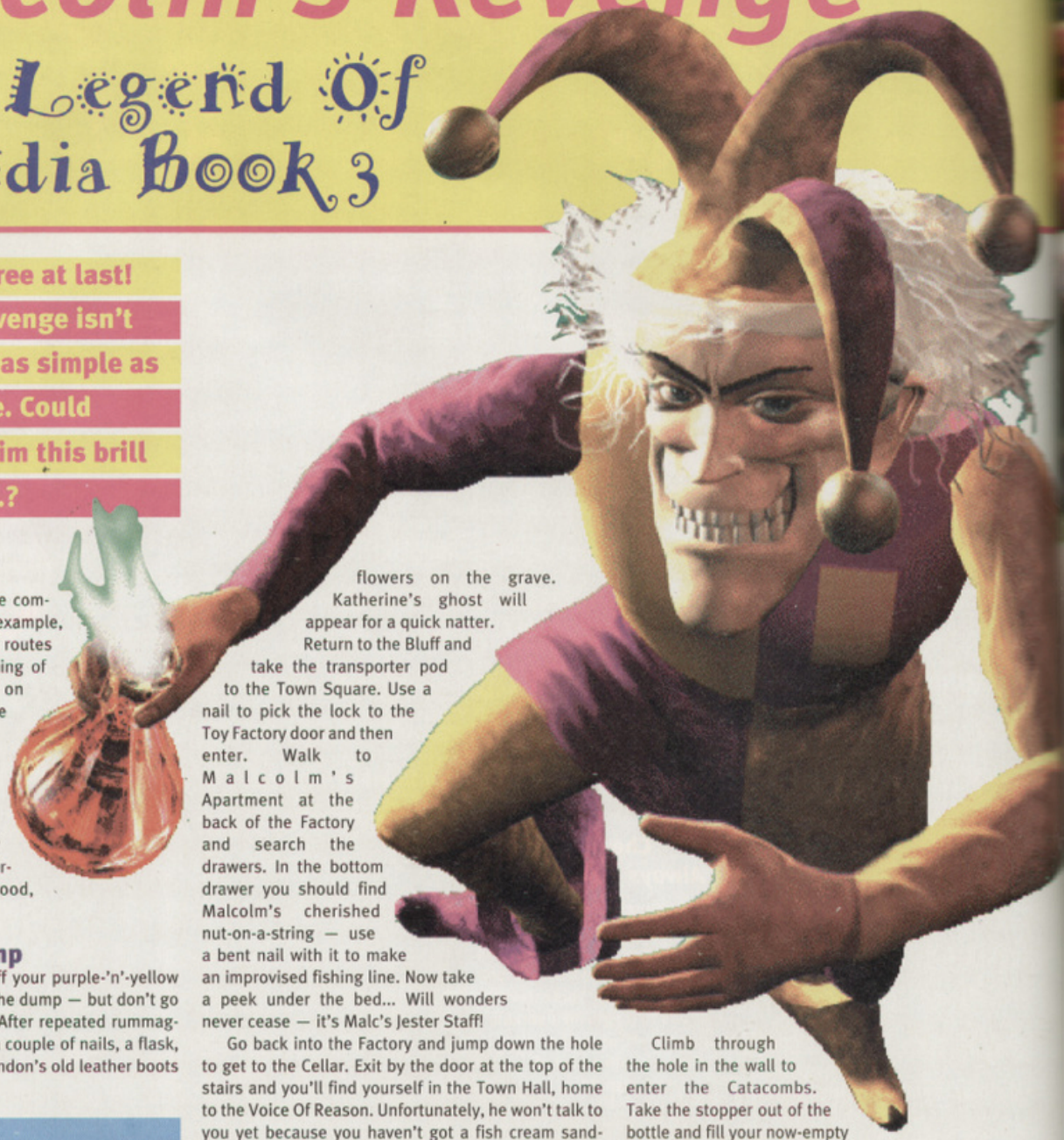
Using the nav-cross as a guide, follow the trench, keeping low to avoid detection. The trench is tight and winding, and occasionally will lead away from the target. Keep following the canyon and the target will eventually spin back into view. Pull back on the stick to climb over the rocky ledges, hugging the canyon floor to avoid revealing your location.

Eventually you'll reach the target, a large gaping fissure which is incredibly easy to hit. Just level the cross-hairs on the target and launch the T-bomb. Now sit back and watch the Kilrah explode in a dazzling ball of flame.

Malcolm's Revenge

The Legend Of Kyrandia Book 3

Heh, heh, heh... Free at last! But Malcolm's revenge isn't going to be quite as simple as he thought it'd be. Could somebody send him this brill solution, please...?



Afore Ye Go...

Malcolm's Revenge can be completed in several ways. For example, there are six different escape routes from Kyrandia at the beginning of the game and, depending on which conscience you choose towards the end of the game, three different finales. For the sake of brevity, this walk-thru only describes one path. However, next month we'll be detailing how to complete all the other different paths. Fair enough? Good, then we'll get going...

Down In The Dump

After brushing the dust off your purple-'n'-yellow tunic, have a gander around the dump — but don't go anywhere *near* that squirrel. After repeated rummaging you should come across a couple of nails, a flask, a broken flask and one of Brandon's old leather boots — take 'em all.

A Grave Situation

Trot left to the Castle and then head south to the Bluff. Go left to reach the Cross Roads, then use the broken flask to cut a flower. Walk north — you should now be in the Graveyard. Use the broken flask to cut another flower. Find Queen Katherine's grave, switch the Mood-O-Meter to 'Nice' and then place the two flowers on the grave. Katherine's ghost will appear for a quick natter.

Return to the Bluff and take the transporter pod to the Town Square. Use a nail to pick the lock to the Toy Factory door and then enter. Walk to Malcolm's Apartment at the back of the Factory and search the drawers. In the bottom drawer you should find Malcolm's cherished nut-on-a-string — use a bent nail with it to make an improvised fishing line. Now take a peek under the bed... Will wonders never cease — it's Malc's Jester Staff!

Go back into the Factory and jump down the hole to get to the Cellar. Exit by the door at the top of the stairs and you'll find yourself in the Town Hall, home to the Voice Of Reason. Unfortunately, he won't talk to you yet because you haven't got a fish cream sandwich. Bugger. Go right to get back to the Town Square.

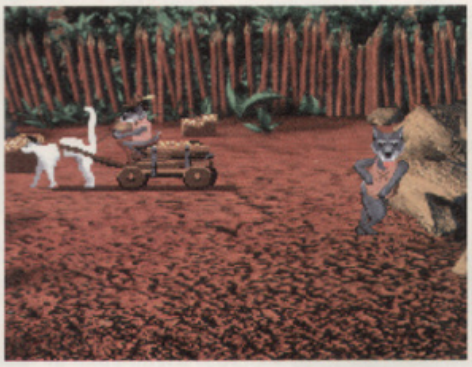
Let's Get Outta Here...

Okay, that's enough gitting about — it's time to leave this stinking island. As mentioned earlier, there is a total of six ways to escape from Kyrandia, but we're going to take the quickest this month. If you fancy replaying the game and trying a different path with the solution provided next month, then you'd best SAVE the game now...

From the Town Square, walk south to the City Limits and then enter the Dairy. After pausing to suck in that dairy air, take some sesame seeds from the tub.

Now go back to the Cellar. Use the nail/string/nut combo on the pool to catch an eel, then use the eel with the seeds. Now place the fertilised seeds on the bricked-up part of the wall. Fill the flask with water from the pool, then pour the water on the seeds. The sesame plant will now grow and crack open the wall. Isn't nature amazing?

Climb through the hole in the wall to enter the Catacombs. Take the stopper out of the bottle and fill your now-empty flask with Portal Potion, a magical drink which will transport you to far-flung lands. However, it'll only work in the Town Arena, so go there. Stand on the round portal pad and have a glug. Within moments you'll find yourself in the Cat Ruins on the Isle Of Cats...



8 Out Of 10 Cats Prefer It...

Dark, isn't it? Walk left to enter the Dog Fort, then pick up the machete. Head off right into the jungle, and use the machete to clear away all the vegetation. If you uncover any snake-like things, whack them with the machete to kill them before they kill you. Oh, and pick up any bones you find — you'll need them later. After much hacking, you should find a hole in the bottom-right of the screen.

Return to the Dog Fort and talk to Duke. Now talk to the cat pulling the cart. She'll tell you about Fluffy. Head left into the jungle, then left again and then up. You may have to clear away the undergrowth to reveal the paths off each screen. Keep collecting any bones you find — you'll need six in all.

By now you should have found Fluffy. If you haven't, you've got lost. Don't worry — wander around and eventually you'll reach civilisation again. If you're at the Dog Fort, go into the jungle and try again. If you're not, hitch a lift there by talking to the driver of the cart in 'Nice' mode.

Assuming you've found Fluffy, go into 'Lie' mode and talk to him. He'll give you a magical leather mouse. Go right to the Altar Of Cats, then go right again to the Colossus. Use the mouse on each of the stone balls to turn them into cat statues. Return to the Dog Fort and enter the Cat Ruins. Walk down the stairs into the Hieroglyphics Room, and use the mouse on the wall to shed some light on the subject. Now use the mouse on each of the statues and make a note of what happens. Keep this note safe — you'll need it later on...

Dogs Love Bones

Take the cart to the Dog Fort and then SAVE THE GAME! It'll save you a lot of boring bone searching. Give a bone to Duke, and he'll scurry off and dig up a gem. If he doesn't, LOAD up that saved game and try again. If he does, SAVE the game again, and then offer Duke another bone. Carry on doing this until you have six multi-coloured gems.

Now go to the Altar Of Cats and use each gem on the altar in turn, making a note of what happens. Look familiar? Now walk left to the Colossus and place a gem on each statue, based on what you saw earlier in the Hieroglyphics Room. (If you're feeling lazy, the correct order, from left-most statue to right-most, is: White, Yellow, Purple, Green, Blue, Red.) Take the crystal mouse that appears.

Manky Island

Take the cart to Pirate Beach. Talk to the pirates and their captain. Use the crystal mouse on Louie to turn him into a mouse, thus persuading the captain to take you back to Kyrandia. The scurvy scum will betray you, however, and you'll be handed over to Kallak and Brandon, who'll banish you to the Ends Of The Earth.

It's probably a good idea to SAVE the game now, to avoid disappointment later. Go to the machine on the right and select the umbrella. Use one of the three coins you've got on the machine, then take the umbrella. Now select the pool float, deposit a coin and then take it.

Now jump on the left-most barrel to ride down the waterfall. Put on the float, then use the pump to inflate the flower peeking from under the ledge. Making sure you've safely stowed away the pump, use the flower as a springboard to bounce over to the other side of the waterfall. Now use the umbrella on the hook to swing across to the waterfall. Now use the umbrella on Malcolm and then click on the rocks to float down. Look in the cave and enjoy the movie. Now use the umbrella again to float down to the next ledge, go into the cave and watch another movie.

A Very Fishy Business...

You're now prisoner of the Fish Queen, who'll force you to play tedious games of Tic-Tac-Toe against her forever. Whack Malcolm into 'Lie' mode, play and lose the game, then talk to the Queen. She'll be flattered by your smooth charms and allow you to have a wander around. Every so often the Queen will summon you back for another game; just follow the same method to escape again. When you get the chance, you need to do the following...

Have a chat to the merman guard in the Fish Court, who'll tell you some very interesting info about the Queen's fear of her dead father. Go right from the

Have Fun!

Hey Mr Dull, don't do just what we tell you to do. Remember, you're a jester — lighten up a little! Try chatting to people in different mood modes... Use your Jester's Staff on them... Ignore Gunther's 'good' advice... Basically, make an idiot of yourself! Don't worry about getting killed; you normally get a second chance to do things right — and you could earn some extra points into the bargain.

Court to the Sluice Support, then left to Perch University. Tickle one of the fish-faced students with your Jester Staff and then, while the teacher deals with the scuffle, take the apple. Head left again and watch the Hell Ride.

Jump into the sluice and pull the lever to end up in the Dump. Scour the Dump for a newspaper, but also pick up any apples, worm-eaten apples or worms you find. Chat to the bat fish to get two gold coins. You can trade items with the bat fish to get more cash to pay for the Hell Ride, but a faster escape route is to eat any whole or half-eaten apples in your inventory until you've got at least a couple of worms.

Now go to the Sluice Support and give the two worms to the big fish at the bottom of the support. If you now take another sluice ride, you'll end up at the Door To The Underworld. Talk to the clerk, and she'll tell you how to perform a seance.

Now wait for the Queen to summon you. Play Tic-Tac-Toe again, and when there are five mermen on the board start the seance. Drop the coin and click on the newspaper, then watch as the Fish King appears. Now get out as soon as possible.

Get rid of any coins you've picked up, and then go around collecting as many manufactured items as possible (i.e. things like keys, fondue sets, socks, etc). However, make sure you've got at least one empty slot left in your inventory. Using the same method as before, get another couple of worms (if you run out of apples, you can get more from Perch University by repeating the student-tickling exercise), feed them to the big fish in the Sluice Support then ride down the Underworld again.

Put Malcolm into 'Nice' mode and talk to the old-age pensioner waiting in the line. Persuade him to let your queue-hop. The clerk will eventually usher you straight through the door and into Hell. While you're waiting for your papers, talk to all the people who wander by. You'll soon find yourself in the Boon Docks. Now use the weird contraption to be whisked away to Kyrandia...

Home Sweet Home?

You now get to choose whether to play on with either Gunther, Stewart or both consciences. Because we like being bad we'll continue with Gunther this month, but we'll be explaining how to play with Stewart or with Gunther AND Stewart next month, so it might be a good idea to SAVE your game now if you fancy exploring these two alternate plot paths.

Walk to the Castle and enter. Chat to Louie, then go to the Castle Dump. Search it for your nut-on-a-string and a nail. Now go the Town Square and unlock the door to the Magician's Lodge with the nail. Go the Ex-Baths (now a Pawn Shop), enter the shop and talk to Herman to see what he wants. If you don't have what he wants, leave and re-enter the shop and then talk to Herman again. Carry on doing this until you manage to trade an item for some sesame seeds.

Now go back to the Dump. Place the seeds near the squirrel, use the nut-on-a-string on the squirrel, then take the hypnotised squirrel. Now go to the Cellar. Press the green apple on the rug, stand on the rug, then press the red apple — you'll now be teleported to Darm and Brandywine's pad. Ask Darm for a Portal Potion. Eventually Brandywine will ask for a squirrel. Give it to her, and she'll make Darm fetch a potion.

Make your way to the Town Arena and use the Portal Potion to teleport to the Cat Ruins. Go to the Dog Fort and pick up the machete, then visit Fluffy in the jungle. Talk to Fluffy, who'll give you a cheesemaker. Now travel to the Colossus and use the cheesemaker. Use the cheese on the mouse statue and then take the six gems. Go back to see Fluffy, who'll give you a can of tuna. Now just use the can to travel back to Kyrandia!

When you arrive back in Kyrandia you'll find your inventory is empty. Go to the Castle Dump and search it for the Fish Queen's magic collar and the nut-on-a-string. Go to the Castle Foyer, show one of the gems to Louie and then give the collar to Jean Claude. The pirates will now be summoned by the Fish Queen and disappear. Yo-ho-ho!

I Want To Be Free!

It's time to prove Malcolm's innocence. Drop the machete and the cheesemaker. You'll find the remains of your inventory either at the Town Arena or the Pegasus Landing — pick up anything you think Herman will trade.

Now collect as many logs as you can fit in your inventory, then go to the Toy Factory. Fiddle with the levers on the strange-looking machine, then use the book on the left. Keep fiddling with the levers in various combinations until you see a blueprint of either a toy soldier or a toy horse float across the room. Put a log in the top of the machine and press the green button to create a toy. Now repeat the process until you've converted all your logs into toys.

Once your inventory is full, go to the Pawn Shop. Trade with Herman until you've got the crutch with a gem and three lots of sesame seeds). Now go the Dump and search it for a bent nail, a straight nail, a flask and the nut-on-a-string.

Use the nail with the nut-on-a-string, then head for the Cellar. Fish in the pool until you've got three eels, and use two of the eels on two lots of the sesame seeds, then fill the flask with from the pool and water each set of fertilised seeds. Now go the Dairy and put both sesame plants in the hopper. Use the nail on the cream container and fill the flask with cream.

Go to the Fish Cream Parlour in the Town Square, and fix the machine with the crutch. Put the eel, the sesame seeds and the cream into the hopper, then take the freshly-made fish cream sandwich. Yummy! Now head for Malcolm's Apartment. Look under the bed to find King William's picture.

Now go to the Town Hall via the Cellar and the sewer. Talk to the Voice Of Reason, then put the picture in the cabinet and give the fish-cream sandwich to the Voice Of Reason. You'll be transported to the Fish Cream Parlour. Now put the picture in the cabinet, then sit back, relax and enjoy the end sequence!

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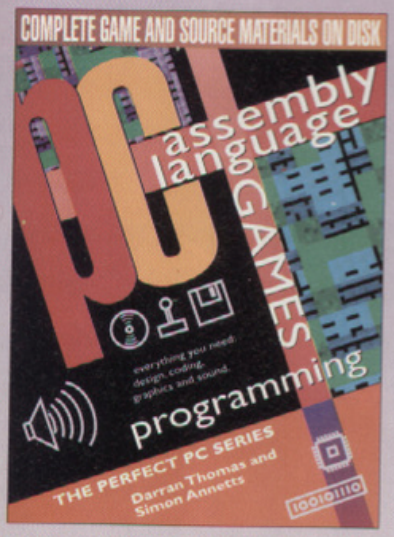

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Calling all empire builders! Gulp down this top advice and transform your puny towers into impenetrable fortresses!

Lords Of The Realm

Overall Strategy

(1) First things first. Try to increase the population of your first land through farming. When you finally have enough men to spare, build up an army to protect the town cross, otherwise your stronghold will remain undefended.

(2) Start producing wood, stone and iron and other resources as soon as possible — you'll need a population of *at least* a thousand men before profits are made, though. Alternatively save up your cash and, rather than work the resources, buy them all in from passing merchants.

(3) Getting the right balance of offence and defence is tricky, and really depends on the campaign strategy you adopt. If you plan to move through the territories quickly, invest in arming your troops with weapons which will make them tougher and more effective warriors. If you're planning to remain stationary, pile money into developing your castle.

(4) Keeping *all* your counties happy is vital, and making sure the heartland counties are content is just as important as protecting the borderlands. Therefore, try to expand at a steady rate, building up and sustaining each county before you stretch out to the next.

Successful Agriculture

(1) Only ever specialise in only one crop per county. You'll face considerable drawbacks if you try and mix them, and are more likely to suffer food shortages throughout the year.

(2) Try to use as many fields as possible, but take care so as not to cause a decline in fertility (through constant over-use. The more fields used for cattle breeding increases birth rates and will decrease death rates, but only use as many fields as you have labourers to farm them.

(3) Unfortunately there are random events like thunderstorms and raids that kill or destroy crop stores, so always to keep a little extra food to cover for such a tragedy.

Raising Sheep

(1) Sheep are an extremely valuable cash crop, because the wool they produce can be traded for even more valuable gold. Therefore don't waste them by using them for food, as they can't reproduce fast enough to meet demands.

(2) To convert wool into grain you need merchants, so therefore you must wait for one to arrive in your county. Therefore it is essential to build up a stockpile of grain to last through any dry patches when merchants are scarce.

(3) To increase the size of your flock rapidly, buy sheep from merchants rather than waiting for them to reproduce naturally.

(4) Always bear this in mind: sheep only ever give birth during a single birthing season, while cows reproduce every season. However, their annual birth rate is higher.

Raising Cattle

Again, don't consume your cattle as they cannot reproduce fast enough to meet demand. However, the dairy products they generate are an excellent source of food.

Farming Grain

(1) Always keep a little grain in storage to be used for sowing, otherwise you could lose a whole year's supply of food. Also remember that the grain has to last for four whole seasons.

(2) When allocating farmers for sowing, bear in mind it takes roughly 1.5 times as many men to harvest the grain. Sow too many seeds and you won't be able to harvest the entire crop.

(3) Grain is the cheapest crop to farm so use it while starting out. Unlike cattle, you can build up a stockpile of grain without having to maintain it.

Building An Army

(1) Construct or purchase weapons as early on in the game as you can, because this doubles the effectiveness of your warriors. Maces and axes increase the aggressiveness of your army and are therefore excellent attacking weapons, while spears are better suited for defending.

(2) If you're short on cash, arm all soldiers with maces and spears as these are cheaper to produce, while archers and crossbow-men should be included in every medium-sized army as they are invaluable for whittling down the enemy at a distance.

(3) If, on the other hand, money is in plentiful supply, purchase as many knights as possible because they're extremely effective in combat.

Fighting A Ground Battle

(1) Always try to surround your target and attack from different sides, using knights to outrun and outflank the enemy. Also try luring the enemy into marsh land as this hinders their movement, but make sure you don't follow them into the swamp. Instead attack from the edge.

(2) Eliminate enemy archers as quickly as possible. Use your own crossbow-men right from the beginning of the battle, protecting them with your foot troops to prevent them from being engaged in direct hand-to-hand combat.

Designing A Strong Castle

(1) The central defensive point should never be placed on the outer edge of the castle as this makes it prone to enemy infantry attacks. Instead place it in the middle as invaders will have to break through the outer walls before reaching the keep. Ideally you should construct two outer walls, space permitting.

(2) Build higher walls as they make it more difficult for the enemy to climb using ladders and siege towers. Also dig moats around your castle, as these buy extra time during a siege and only require minimal labour to construct.

(3) When designing a castle leave plenty of storage space for both food and men. Providing there is enough room for expansion, storage halls can be added later in the game.

(4) Take into account that towers, gatehouses and keeps add defensive bonuses against all ladder, fighter and tower attacks adjacent to them. Therefore a well-guarded castle should have have these emplacements at least every two squares, to cover attacks from every angle.

Attacking A Castle

(1) Unless completely necessary, never attack a castle with unarmed men — convert your men into foragers and builders until they can be used to man ladders and siege towers.

(2) If you're short on manpower, start by building weapons while keeping the army on half-rations, then gradually change more troops to foraging after the weapons have been constructed. Afterwards remember to switch the rations back to normal.

(3) Plan the construction of war machines carefully. Giant catapults should be built in the first turn, then fired at the castle walls in the next round. While the catapults are firing, get the builders to construct ladders and towers. Then, in the third turn, the walls should be at least partly destroyed, allowing you to break inside using the ladders.

(4) Always try to simultaneously attack from numerous angles, because then the defender must divide his troops to protect each wall. Also try not to attack a wall next to a tower or gatehouse, as these are more difficult to penetrate.

Defending Against A Siege

(1) Providing your army is large enough and is placed next to or near the castle gatehouse, consider engaging the enemy in good, old-fashioned hand-to-hand combat. Take care though, as you won't always know which weapons the enemy is carrying until the fight begins.

(2) If you leave the safety of the castle to engage the enemy, leave behind a handful of armed troops to protect the garrison.

A Few Final Words Of Advice...

(1) This one is fairly obvious, but try to make as many alliances as possible to divert opposing commander's attacks from your territories. This also allows you to reduce the defence of some county borders, providing your adjacent ally can be completely trusted. One word of warning, though — never, ever reduce the defensive army to nothing, because no matter how trusting your neighbour is, he won't pass up the chance to take over an unprotected county.

(2) When attacking a county it's probably best to wait for a season in which a merchant appears. Why? Because if you succeed in capturing the county, the merchant will help you to repair at least some of the damage from the attack.

(3) This tip may take a little time to implement, but if you can afford it, build additional grain stockpiles in each of the counties. This means you don't have to worry about feeding the ever-hungry mouths of any armies passing through your lands.

cheat lab

Once again the hallowed doors of the Cheat Lab creak open and an Alone In The Dark 3 hack, some 'magic' phone numbers for Premier Manager 3 and a crowd of rowdy Rise Of The Triad codes, run screaming for safety...

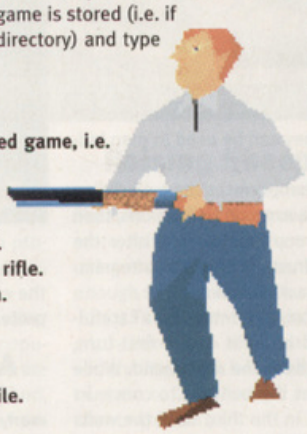
Alone In The Dark 3

Infogrames

If you're struggling valiantly in Alone 3, battling overwhelming odds with little more than a .38 Special and a pair of Mexican maracas, take heart from the fact that, although you're probably going to die this time around, when you play Alone 3 next time you can use a cheat which allows you to kill the zombie hordes with ruthless efficiency.

How? Well, not only has Mr C. Lee of Walthamstow provided the complete Alone 3 solution that starts on page 90, but he has also included a nice little hack that allows you to swap your Wild West pea-shooter for something a little more powerful... First, save your current game and remember where you saved it. Then exit Alone 3, log onto the directory where the saved game is stored (i.e. if you saved in California, change to the **SAVEoo** directory) and type the following:

DEBUG	
NSAVE?.ITD	**The position of the saved game, i.e. NSAVEo.**
L	**Loads the file.**
EAE64 oo 40	**Increases health.**
EBoCE oo 40	**Gives you a .38 Special.**
EBoC6 oo 40	**Gives you a Winchester rifle.**
EB1Co oo 40	**Gives you a Gatling gun.**
EB16A oo 40	**Gives you a shotgun.**
EAE7A oo 40	**Full health.**
EB1EA oo 40	**Gives you a Colt 45.**
W	**Writes/saves the new file.**
Q	**Quits DEBUG.**



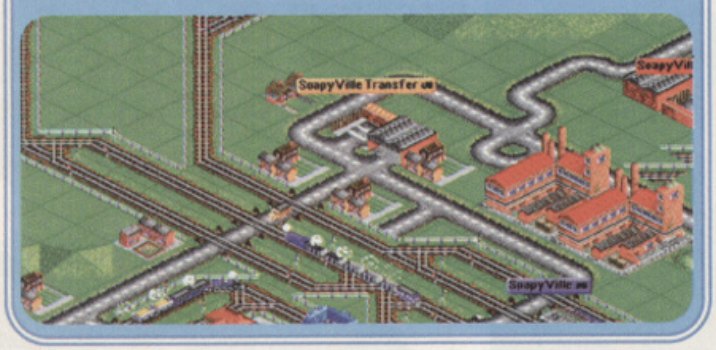
Now reload Alone In The Dark 3, access the saved game and you'll find that you've now become a walking arsenal.

Transport Tycoon

MicroProse

Although we covered almost every low-down, competitor-nobbling tactic back in Issue 6, Rune Bjonness from Norway has come up with one more devious entry for the 'How To Be A Complete Git' Transport Tycoon handbook.

Although you can't directly bulldoze your opponents roads, if you build a section of railway track across an enemy road tile, you *can* dig it up, thereby throwing your opponent's transport network into chaos and clearing the way for new stations in the heart of cities. Pretty clever eh?



Descent

Interplay

With over 30 levels in the full game, Interplay's 3D blaster can be very tough to beat. But like Doom and Heretic there are some cheat codes that you can tap in to make life in the caverns that tiny bit easier.

If you don't want to know the Descent cheats (which only work in the full version of the game, by the way) then look away now. But if you're a games-player of lesser moral fibre, when your ship appears at the beginning of a level, type GABBA GABBA HEY to enable the cheat mode. Now type MITZI to give you all the pass keys, SCOURGE to give you all the weapons and FARMER JOE to warp to any level.

If you haven't got the full version of the game, Daniel Rhodes from Wigan has written in with a simple hack that allows you to play any of the levels in the Shareware version of Descent. Using Xtree Gold or PC Tools, edit your player file (located in the game directory with a .PLR file extension) and accidentally change byte 8 to a new value of 07. Save the new file, reload the game and you will be able to access any of the Shareware levels.

Premier Manager 3

Gremlin Interactive

If you're having cash-flow troubles in Gremlin's massively addictive Premier Manager 3, go straight to the phones and dial 945475. Apparently a mystery benefactor will add a whopping £1.5 million to your bank account. Think of who you could buy for that... Three cheap defenders, a Barmby, half a Sutton, a third of a Shearer. To boost all your player's fitness levels to 99, dial 010870 and to get the ultimate assistant manager, punch in 718143. Thanks to Steve McKevitt from Sheffield for those — you are a star.

Rise Of The Triad

Apogee

If you've been running around dodging the digitised blood in Apogee's impressive Rise Of The Triad, then you'll probably be more than interested if I mention that we've got a long list of ROTT cheat codes.

Yes, as luck would have it, Spencer Parker from my old home town of Marlow in Bucks, has surfed across the Global Information Organism to drop the complete set of ROTT codes onto our Cyber-doormat. Like Doom and Heretic you just type them in at any time during a game and, without further mindless waffle, here they are...

DIPSTIC	To toggle cheat codes on/off.
GOOBERS	Restart current level.
GOTO	Activates GOTO level list.
CHOJIN	All weapons, no wounds.
TOOSAD	God mode (temporary).
FLYBOY	Mercury mode (temporary).
BADTRIP	Shrooms Mode.
SPEED	Autorun on/off.
PANIC	Resets everything back to normal.
BOING	Toggle friction effects on/off.
LONDON	Fog on.
NODNOL	Fog off.
SHOOTME	Bullet-proof armour.
BURNME	Asbestos armour.
LUNGDUNG	Gas mask.
SIXTOYS	Gives you all the keys to the level.
HUNTPACK	Outfits player with everything.
JOHNWOO	Double pistols.
PLUGME	Machine gun.
VANILLA	Bazooka.
FIREBOM	Firebomb.
HOTTIME	Heatseeker.
BOOZE	Drunk Missile.
BONES	Flamewall.
SEEYA	Hand Of God.
RIDE	Missile Camera on/off.
WHERE	HUD on/off.

cheat lab Interactive

Help me if you can, I'm feeling down. And I do appreciate you being round. Help me get my feet back on the ground. Won't you please, please, help me?

Dear Cheat Lab,

Please! Please! Please help us! We are totally stuck on Sam & Max Hit The Road. We can stop the Tunnel Of Love and we've talked to the moleman in the back room, but he wants cotton candy before he'll give us the key to Trixie's caravan. Where do you find, or how do you get, the candy?

K. Elliot & S. Hawthorne,
Armagh, N. Ireland.

Well guys, it's actually very simple. Drive to any of the handily-placed Snuckey outlets and buy a box of Pecan-flavoured candy. Pay for it at the counter and then take it back to the mole-meister at the funfair. That's it.

Dear Cheat Lab,

Please could you give me the solution to Mission 7 in Star Trek: 25th Anniversary because the Enterprise 2 always kills me. Please help me kill them.

Philip Bath,
Chester.

There's no easy way to destroy the enemy Enterprise, but at PC GAMES we've found that setting your speed to either 2 or 3 tends to make your enemy fly around in circles, preventing it from getting a clear lock on your ship. Then you just pummel it with your phasers and photon torpedoes until it explodes. Perseverance, I'm afraid to say, is the only way to beat the evil Enterprise and finish the game.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I have recently bought Little Big Adventure and I am stuck. I need to know how to get the blue tunic. It would also help if you could tell me how to get further in the underground temple.

Neil van Beinum,
Hove.

Okay. Well, if you've made your way to the underground temple and you haven't yet found the blue tunic, you've gone very wrong somewhere along the way. After you've escaped from Funfrock's jail, make your way south until you reach your dream home next to the ocean. If it's your first visit, you'll see Zoe standing outside and you'll then be shot by a pair of marauding elephants — this bit is unavoidable, I'm afraid.

But if you've been here before, jump up on the grass behind the house and break in via the chimney at the top of the screen. Once inside, search every cupboard, plant pot and sink for bonuses and power-ups. The blue tunic and the ball of power can be found in the room with the architects drawing board in it.

Dear Cheat Lab,

Can you tell me how to raise the 6,000 pieces of eight to charter Kate's boat in Monkey Island 2?

Adrian Murphy,
Co. Cork, Ireland.

Yes, I can. After you've won the spitting contest (which involves moving the flags and then using the green drink to thicken your spit), take the victory plaque and go to the antique shop. Once inside, talk to the shopkeeper and try to sell him the plaque. At first he'll be a little hesitant, but if you persevere and choose answers that build the plaque up to be an ancient artefact of immense value, he'll offer to buy it from you for 6,000 pieces of eight. By a lucky coincidence, that's just how much you need to charter Kate's boat...

Dear Cheat Lab,

Help! In Zak McKraken And The Alien Mindbenders, I can't get hold of the yellow crystal in the temple or the blue shard in Seattle. Also, how do you win the Lotto?

Secondly, in Monkey Island, I don't know how to get the banana picker?

Thirdly, in Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade, I am stuck under Venice. What does the machine with the cogs do? What do I do in the room with the strange plank and chain hanging down?

Lastly, about the Tube game you gave away with your February Issue. In the **C:\TUBE\DATA** directory I noticed that there are four "level" files. Does this mean that you can access a secret Tube track? If so, how? I hope you can help.

Luke O'Dell,
Cambridgeshire.

You don't ask for much do you? Oh well, let's start at the beginning... To get the blue shard (which lies in a cave near Mount Rainier), use the yellow crayon on the strange wall-markings and then use the remote control (which you should have picked up in Zak's room) on the Ankh door. The blue shard lies inside. As for the yellow crystal and the Lotto, it's all a bit complicated but now that you know how to get the blue crystal, you should be able to work it out for yourself.

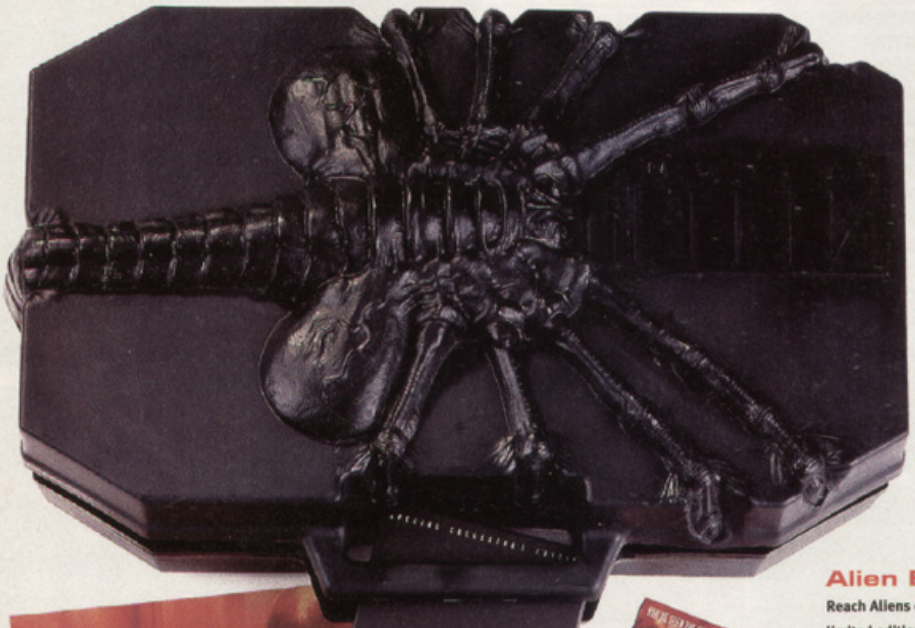
To pick more bananas in Monkey Island, you've got to go to the river fork and climb the ladder until you come across a rock see-saw. Use the spyglass to look at the bananas and push/pull the primitive art until it's directly in line with it. Go up the ladder again and push the big rock that's near the edge. If you've aligned everything correctly, the rocks on the see-saw will hit the tree and knock the bananas off.

In Indy And The Last Crusade, fix the machine by using the fan-belt object in your inventory, then leave and go to the room with the musical skulls in it. Use the Grail diary to play the correct sequence of notes and a door will open.

*Lastly, no there isn't a secret level in our Tube demo. But, if you're still very curious and you rename the **LEV00003.DAT** file to **LEV00000.DAT**, you can reload the game and 'play' the Tube highscore table...*

Game Over, Man!

So Cryo's Aliens may be a few months from release, but there's plenty of stuff to keep the rabid Alien-fan happy during the wait...



Alien Box Set

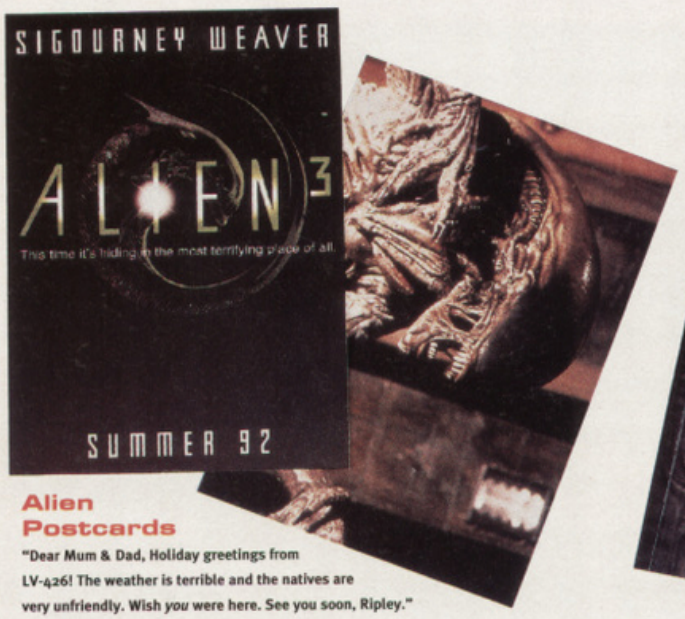
Reach Aliens overload with this limited edition pack, which includes the movie trilogy in widescreen, a 'Making Of Alien 3" video, colour prints and an Alien War pass.
Price: £69.99.

Alien Queen

The Bitch is back — and this time she's made out of plastic! Great fun for the kiddies.
Price: £7.99.

Giger's Alien

This lavish 'coffee table' book contains all of H. R. Giger's intricate Alien sketches and designs.
Price: £14.99.



Alien Postcards

"Dear Mum & Dad, Holiday greetings from LV-426! The weather is terrible and the natives are very unfriendly. Wish *you* were here. See you soon, Ripley."
Price: 40p each.

Movie Classics Kits

Construct a super-scary 'Alien Warrior' from tiny bits of plastic and Airfix glue! Well, it makes a change from Spitfires and B-17 bombers, doesn't it?

Price: £19.99

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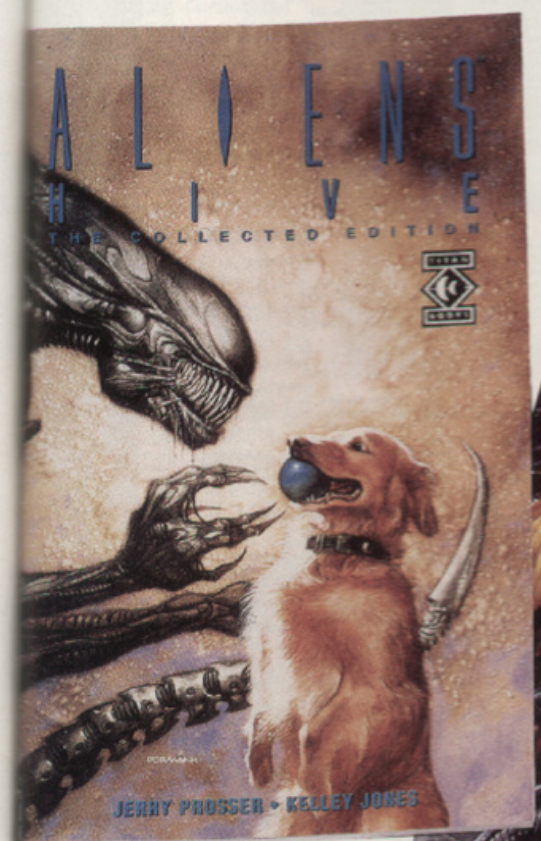
Price: Around £5.99 each.



Alien Comics

Produced by Dark Horse, these excellent spin-off comics feature all-new Aliens stories and characters.

Price: Hive £8.99, Book 1 £7.50 and comics around £1.50 each.

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All these goodies — and many more — can be found at: Forbidden Planet, 71 New Oxford St, London WC1A 1DG. Tel: (0171) 836 4179; mail order: (0171) 497 2150. Open Mon-Sat (Thursday and Friday 'til 7pm). Special thanks to Chris and John at FP who helped make this feature happen.

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Dr SPANNER'S Bits 'n' PCs

At last, the good doctor returns to cast his hyper-critical surgeon's eye over the latest techno gadgets, hardware releases and other miscellaneous bits 'n' pieces...

Dan Nx P5-90

At first glance the Dan Nx P5-90 PC looks like any other standard business machine. It comes in a standard Dan desktop case, has a stylish 15" monitor and it runs games as fast as a 90MHz Pentium. In fact, to all intents and purposes, the Nx P5-90 PC *is* a Pentium PC — it just doesn't have an Intel Pentium chip inside it.

Instead of having an 'Intel Inside', underneath the Dan desktop case is a slick Nx586-90 chip which runs at a smooth 83MHz. In tests the chip's performance, which is manufactured by NexGen, is comparable to a Pentium in almost every respect. In fact, all of the Pentium-recommended games that I played on it scoot along wonderfully — Wing Commander III runs like a dream, System Shock's scrolling is smoother than a brushed Cashmere codpiece and BioForge, Descent and Dark Forces all look and move absolutely superbly. It doesn't take a genius to work out that this is an impressively powerful machine and if I had the money I wouldn't hesitate in getting one myself.

The Dan Nx P5-90 is comparable to a Pentium in almost every respect. It just hasn't got an Intel Pentium chip inside it...

The Nx P5-90 is so fast because, unlike Intel's Pentium, the NexGen 586 chip is a RISC-based processor (which, if you muist know, stands for Reduced Instruction Set Computing). In comparison, the existing x86 Intel processors are CISC-based chips (Complex Instruction Set Computing), where the processor calculates several things at the same time. Because a RISC chip uses smaller sets of instructions, it can perform mathematical calculations quicker than its x86 counterpart. There is a problem, of course, and it's that a RISC chip can't run x86 code directly, so the NexGen overcomes this by being a hybrid of the two.

What the NexGen chip actually does is interpret the information it receives in bog-standard x86 format and then converts it into RISC instructions for processing. As such any lingering doubts about compatibility that you may have are groundless, because every major game that I've tested on the Dan PC has run perfectly.

As for the future, obviously the NexGen PC uses a RISC-based chip (which is a tad bigger than the Intel Pentium processor) and so, even though it emulates x86 architecture, you can't just rip out the chip and slap a Intel P6 in it. The NexGen motherboard has a socket that will only accept NexGen chips, and so you've got to hope that by the time Pentium owners are drooling over the P6, those nice R&D people at NexGen will have developed their own blisteringly-quick 686 equivalent.

The Dan P5-90 is without a doubt one of the neatest, fastest machines that I've come across. With the 586 chip, 16Mb of RAM and a 2Mb Diamond Stealth graphics card as standard, it's very quick indeed, and as Intel starts to move towards RISC technology with the P6, we may well be seeing a lot more of this type of PC in the future.

Right now, I'm so impressed that I'd gladly keep the PC I've got and fight anyone who tries to take it away from me. It's a gorgeous machine, and although the clock speed is slightly lower than a Pentium, it's right up there with Intel's chip in terms of performance. Very nice indeed. Very nice...

● **Manufactured by: Dan. Price: £1399.99. Tel: (0181) 830 1100.**

SoundWave 32 + SCSI

So why do you need a new soundcard? You may be perfectly happy with the one you've got, especially if it makes a decent noise and it's compatible with all the major games. In fact, if you've got something like a Sound Blaster 16 or an AWE-32 then you probably won't be interested in this at all. But if you're still listening to crashes and laser blasts through a tinny 8-bit soundcard, then you might consider upgrading your PCs boom-box to Orchid's nifty SoundWave 32.

The SoundWave 32 is a 16-bit wavetable card, which means that it uses a library of pre-recorded effects and instruments to produce a much more realistic sound. Like most of the 16-bit cards available, it combines multimedia compatibility (its SCSI-2 interface supports Mitsumi, Sony, Panasonic, NEC and other CD drives) with sound emulation that includes Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Microsoft Sound System, Roland MT-32 and General MIDI.

In short, the SoundWave 32 is excellent. It's easy to install, even easier to use and after two months of constant use, completely error-free. For the freebie hunters among you, the card comes bundled with stereo speakers, a microphone and various bits of recording software, so if you're looking for a soundcard that gives you maximum compatibility with a minimum of fuss, then the SoundWave 32, priced at a mere £170, is definitely worth a closer look.

● **Manufactured by: Orchid Ltd. Price: £170. Tel: (01256) 479898.**

The SoundWave 32 + SCSI is an affordable alternative to the Sound Blaster, offering total compatability with CDs and sound standards.

Techno-Babble!

● With the Pentium fast becoming an entry-level PC, Intel has announced that the first wave of P6 chips should be arriving in about four months time. There is still no definite confirmation of the name that Intel will use for its next generation RISC-core chip, but with Microsoft recently announcing that its new Windows interface will be called Bob, perhaps Intel will call their new chip Eric. Hexium sounds a bit dumb to be honest, while Sexium wouldn't be an accurate description of a PC's abilities. Imagine having an 'Eric Inside', or a 100MHz Bryan. Whatever they decide to call it, we'll tell you more about it nearer the star-studded launch.

● Just as Lethal Enforcers arrives in the City Pride pub next door to our offices, Gem announce that it will be selling the Gamegun for the PC, a natty plastic revolver that you can use with 3D shoot-'em-up games like Mad Dog Macree and, er, some other ones probably. For more information, why not go and contact Gem on: (01279) 442842.

● News reaches the offices of PC GAMES that the next generation of CD storage could soon be upon us in the form of the Super Density Disk, the SDD. Developed by some of the industry big-boys, including such notables as Hitachi, Matsushita and Pioneer, the SDD is the same size as a conventional CD but uses a shorter-wavelength laser, a red one to be exact, to store much more information. More news if, and when, something exciting happens.

● Creative Lab's 3DO Blaster card has finally hit the shelves, a single card and a console-style gamepad that allows you to play all those truly fab 3DO games on your PC. The 3DO Blaster is priced at a reasonable £299 but the catch is that you must have a Creative CD-ROM drive if you want the damn thing to work. The card comes with two rather uninspiring games, Shockwave and Gridders, and although it won't be upgradable to the forthcoming 64-Bit 3DO console, expect the price to drop within the next couple of months.

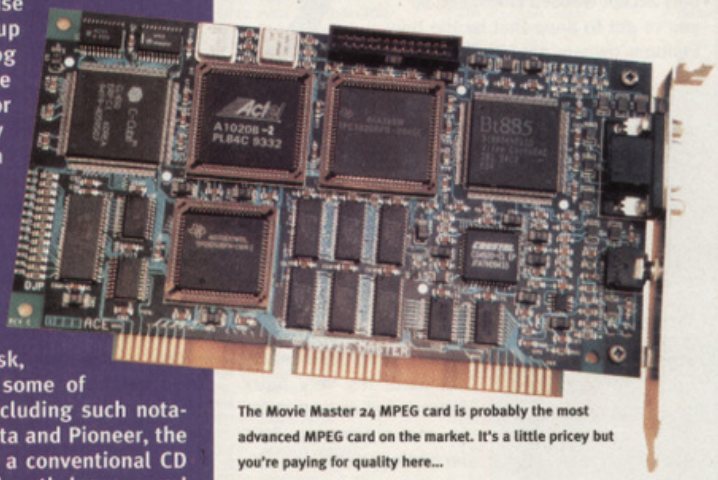
● Argonaut has now released its Blazing Render — or BRender — 3D technology, a set of rendering libraries that promise to totally revolutionise PC games. BRender promises to deliver the kind of graphics that you can only currently get on high-end workstations, thanks to custom graphics chips that handle things like Gouraud shading, texture-mapping and Z buffering, whatever that is. More news, as we always seem to say, when we have some.

Movie Master 24 MPEG Card

Full-Motion Video has always been something of a disappointment on the PC. Apart from Origin's Wing Commander 3 (which manages to play video in a decent-sized letterbox), if you haven't got a dedicated MPEG card, the quality of your FMV is usually restricted to tiny, fuzzy pictures which rarely impress anyone.

And if you're after an MPEG card, the Movie Master 24 from Ace Coin is by far the best of the bunch. It's incredibly slick, a card that can display full-screen, TV-quality pictures and a card that lets you play VideoCDs and dedicated MPEG games to boot. And unlike its 16-bit competitors, the card can also display true 24-bit graphics which means that it can run video in 16.7 million colours with no loss of sharpness or clarity.

The Movie Master 24 allows you to have MPEG movies running in either DOS or Windows, and it's unique due to the fact that it enables you to capture screenshots of the videos or the games that you play on it. Sadly, however, while the technology is hotter than a very hot thing indeed, there are very few MPEG games around that are actually worth the CD that they're etched onto. Fortunately, there's a whole host of VideoCD films available and if you like the idea of watching, say, Top Gun, in one Window while you tinker with the File Manager in another, then an MPEG card is the gadget for you.



The Movie Master 24 MPEG card is probably the most advanced MPEG card on the market. It's a little pricey but you're paying for quality here...

The Movie Master 24, almost a snip at £349, is without a doubt the best MPEG card around. It's a little pricey, and while the bundled VideoCD titles, namely The Twilight Zone, Above The Law (a CD of car crashes and humourous vehicular shunts) and Cat (a dazzling wildlife tour with cats) aren't particularly inspiring, the Movie Master is a quality card and as it's 24-bit it should have a relatively long life.

Of course, you'll need at least a 33MHz 386 PC, 4Mb of RAM, Windows and a CD-ROM drive to use the Movie Master 24 and, if £329 seems like a lot of cash, Ace Coin has thoughtfully released the Movie Master 15 for £239 (the 15-bit version) and the Movie Master classic (the 24-bit MPEG card but with playback option only) for the staggeringly low price of £159. Whatever model you choose, you won't be disappointed.

● **Manufactured by: Ace Coin. Price: £329. Tel: (01952) 293333.**

3DPC

If you've had enough of the Windows Starfield or are fed up with those bouncing multi-coloured lines in the Marquee screensaver, then Diskxpress has a neat and somewhat flashy alternative. I know it's hard to get even remotely excited about a mere Windows screensaver, but while 3DPC doesn't exactly set the adrenalin pumping or the blood racing, it is a fairly

It's not the most exciting screensaver in the world, but 3DPC is flashy, kind of weird and very easy to install and use.

nice collection of 3D, ray-traced, reflective animations which you can instruct to pop up on your PC when you're not using it.

In fact, it's all slightly surreal, and while 3DPC doesn't have the instant attraction or the longevity of something like the Star Wars screensaver, with its strange rotating shapes, explosions of golden, metallic bubbles and pigs flying through space, it makes a nice change from flying toasters, still-life shots and psychedelic line patterns.

All in all, 3DPC is a nice saver. It's simple, so it doesn't take an age to quit out and return to your Windows apps, and while it won't blow your mind (or your bank balance), it's very pretty, fairly relaxing and just weird enough to keep you interested.

● **Published by: Diskxpress. Price: £29.99. Tel: (0181) 348 4414.**

Game Runner

One of the biggest problems with the PC is that its such a bugger to use — **CONFIG.SYS** problems, **AUTOEXEC.BAT** worries, there's not enough EMS to run Dark Forces, you're 3K short of the minimum base memory required for Wing Commander 3, etc, etc, *etc.* And if all this wasn't enough of a nightmare, some Windows programs like Sierra's Outpost and LucasArts' Star Wars screensaver install various read-only files in the Windows sub-directories and alter the **SYSTEM.INI** file which makes eventually getting rid of the programs a major headache.

To counter the nightmare of memory problems, Quarterdeck has released Game Runner, a package that contains the very versatile QEMM 7 memory manager, the HyperDisk disk cache and the Axis Gamecheater. If you're not familiar with it, QEMM (which stands for Quarterdeck Expanded Memory Manager) is a direct replacement for **EMM386.EXE** and, like the Microsoft manager, it tunes your PCs memory for optimum performance, organising your device drivers and freeing up to 634K of base memory.

QEMM is an award-winning product, and while early versions of the manager encountered compatibility problems with some games, I must admit that since I've been using it I've encountered no real problems with QEMM 7 whatsoever. I'm still sceptical, however, mainly because a friend of mine has recently dumped an older version of QEMM in favour of EMM386, but despite this tiny misgiving Gamerunner is still a nifty little package.

With the additional bundling of the HyperDisk caching software, which claims to boost the performance of your hard drive between 300 and 1000% (okay, I did notice a marginal increase in disk access), and the Axis Gamecheater, which allows you to cheat on a long list of ageing games, Gamerunner is a neat, well thought-out product. If you've got a 4Mb or 8Mb machine and things are getting a little tight in the memory department, then Quarterdeck's Gamerunner might just be worth a quick look.

● **Published by: Quarterdeck. Price: £44.99. Tel: (01245) 496699.**

CleanSweep For Windows

Quarterdeck's CleanSweep For Windows is a nifty little utility that allows you to seek out and nuke all those unwanted system files currently clogging up valuable space on your hard disk. Many Windows programs install vital files in multiple directories and tracking them down can be a nightmare. What CleanSweep allows you to do is search your hard disk for unwanted and unused files and to delete programs completely by identifying any stray **.DLL** files that are associated with it.

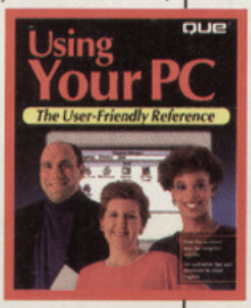
I know it doesn't sound very exciting (and I suppose that, when all's said and done, it isn't, really) but, believe me, CleanSweep is an absolute god-send.

It's amazing how much precious hard disk space you can make available simply by deleting those unwanted fonts and archive files, and how Windows programs no longer stubbornly remain on your hard disk, refusing to be deleted because they're associated with another file hidden deep within the darkest bowels of your PC's **WINDOWS\SYSTEM** directory. All in all, CleanSweep is a very impressive and highly valuable product. It's easy to use and very effective. I don't think I could do without it.

● **Published by: Quarterdeck. Price: £TBA. Tel: (01245) 496699.**

Using Your PC

With so many new people coming to the PC, it's unsurprising that there are a great many of you who are still puzzled by **CONFIG.SYS** files, flummoxed by RAM and completely in the dark when it comes to something as basic as changing directories. As you probably know, the PC can be really confusing. It isn't the easiest machine in the world to use, and if you're still struggling with DOS or staring blankly at Windows, it's probably a good idea to get a book to help you out.



There are a lot of good books around, books that focus on everything from DOS to Windows to navigating around the Internet. QUE's Using Your PC is probably as basic as they come. It uses a clear, non-technical, no-nonsense approach, explaining the ins-and-outs of things like memory, DOS, CD-ROM games and even multimedia and Bulletin Boards with relevant pictures and examples. Whatever you need to know about your PC you can find it in here, because Using Your PC describes things in plain English without sounding patronising or making you feel like a total idiot.

At over 400 pages, Using Your PC is a hefty book but for the newcomer to the PC, whether you're a DOS dummy or a PC pillock, it's a handy beginner's guide and an invaluable learning tool.

● **Published by: QUE. Price: £18.49.**

Wingman Extreme

The joystick business can be a very costly one. Okay, simple arcade joysticks with two or three buttons tend to sell at around £15, but the super-duper, coolie hat, flight-sim sticks are usually a touch more expensive. To put things in perspective, the gorgeously marvellous F-16 FLCS from Paperlogic is a drink-spluttering £199.99 while the Gravis Phoenix sells for a whopping £119.95. With these sorts of joystick you pay for quality and reliability, and so the things that run through your mind when you see a sim-quality joystick for less £50 are that it's probably cheap, nasty and bound to snap after three months of intensive waggling.

But these are not criticisms that can be levelled at the Logitech Wingman Extreme. The WE is a lovely joystick despite the fact that it's non-programmable and has only four fire buttons and a coolie hat. The stick itself is neatly sculpted to fit the palm of your sweaty gamer's hand, and the heavy base (which makes the joystick weigh a ton) means that it's unlikely to move about on the desk when you're in a frantic dogfight or screaming around Surfer's Paradise in an IndyCar.

Although the Wingman Extreme doesn't have quite the stylish flair or the features of some of the more expensive sticks on the market, it's good, solidly reliable and it's a very affordable £49.95. So, if you want a decent sim-quality joystick and you don't want it to cost you an arm and leg, then take a close look at the Wingman Extreme. You can still plug it into the Thrustmaster WCS and with the £50 you save, you could treat yourself to dinner.

● **Manufactured by: Logitech: Price: £49.95. Tel: (01344) 891313.**

The Wingman Extreme is a hefty joystick but at under £50, it's a cheap alternative to Thrustmaster and a good-quality sim-stick in its own right.

Pass Notes

No 4,763: The Pentium Overdrive

Appearance
Something that fell off the Batmobile. If the Batmobile was grey.

Job?
To turn your humble 486 weakling into an all-singing, all-dancing, all-powerful Pentium PC for the bargain basement price of £299.

Also known as?
The P24T.

Brilliant. So I can upgrade to a Pentium for under £300?
Well... no, not really. You see, the P24T is really a cut-down version of the 'proper' Pentium chip. If you've got a Version 3 ZIF socket, you simply remove the old central processor chip and drop in the new one which boosts the performance of your 486 and makes it go faster.

Did you say a Version 3 ZIF socket?
Yes. That's the browney-beige one. The Pentium Overdrive upgrade won't work unless you've got a Version 3 socket on your PC's motherboard.

And, er, what if I don't happen to have a Version 3 socket?
You're stuffed. Basically.

So what does this new chip do?
The P24T upgrade comes in two distinct and very separate flavours — the chip available right now allows you to upgrade 486SX-25 and SX-50 machines to a respectable 63MHz, while the second P24T (which is due some time later on this year) will crank up the clock speed of 486DX-33 and DX-66 PCs to a massive 84MHz.

It sounds great!
Yes, it does, doesn't it? It should give your ailing SX PC a new lease of life. Think of it as like slapping a bigger engine in a Robin Reliant.

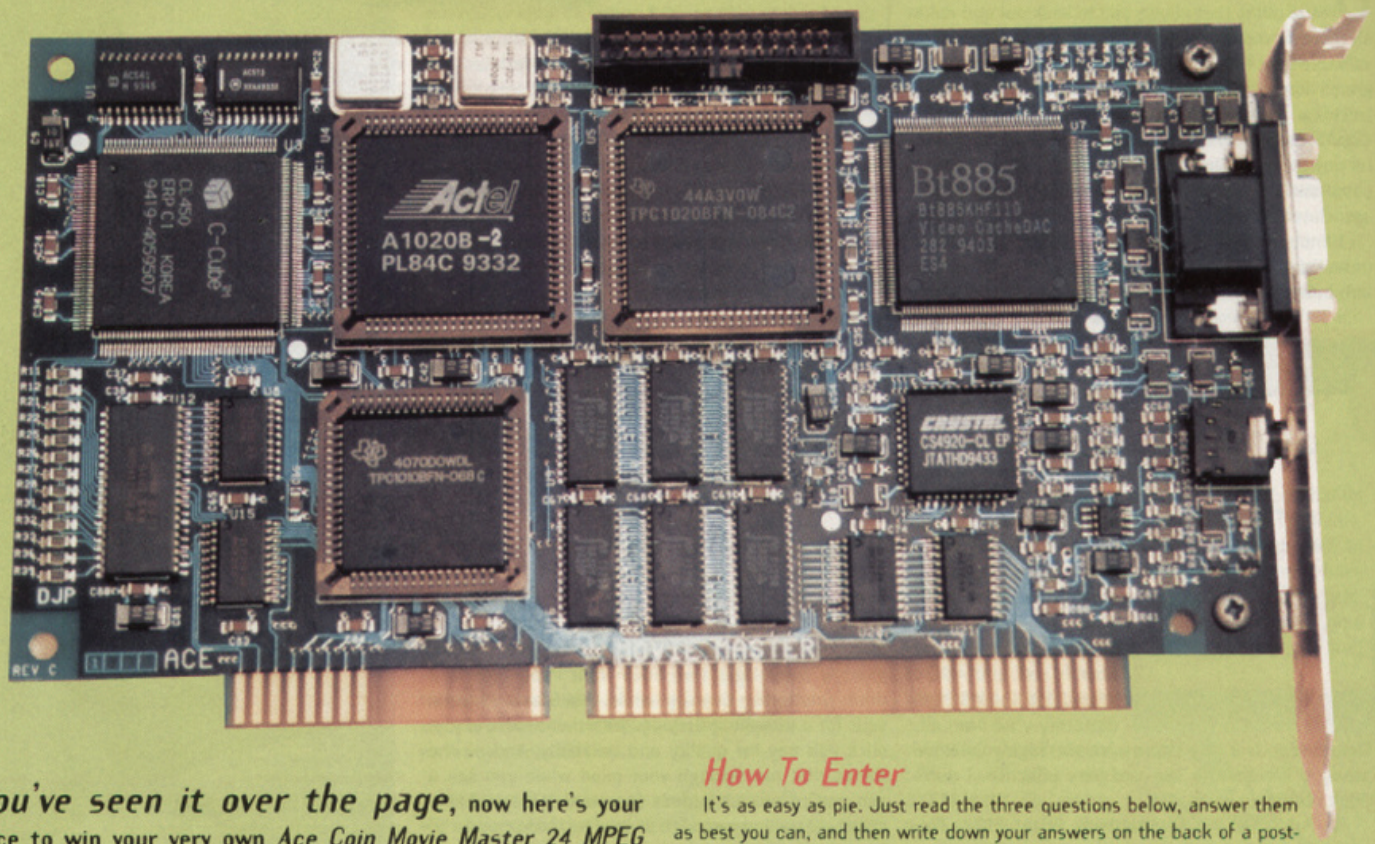
I'll go and get one then...
Okay, but remember this is as far as you can take your old 486 PC. With games like Wing Commander 3 and Bioforge demanding a Pentium PC to get the best out of them, you'll probably be better off investing in a fully-fledged Pentium in the long term.

Although your current PC may well be 'Pentium ready', and although the P24T will boost its speed to a half-decent level, it isn't a true Pentium chip. If you're going to keep pace with cutting edge gaming, you're going to need a new motherboard, I'm afraid. Or a completely new PC.

Oh bugger.
You said it.

WIN!

A Movie Master 24 *MPEG* card!



You've seen it over the page, **now here's your chance to win your very own *Ace Coin Movie Master 24 MPEG card!* The Movie Master 24 is the most advanced MPEG card on the market, a card that is able to display full-screen, TV-quality video in 16.7 million colours with no loss of image quality or clarity. And one of these babies could be yours! Yes – yours!!! Excessive use of the exclamation mark means that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that you just can't afford to miss...**

How To Enter

It's as easy as pie. Just read the three questions below, answer them as best you can, and then write down your answers on the back of a postcard or a sealed envelope. For example, if you think that the answer to Question 1 is 'Motion Pictures Export Group', then write 1 (a) on your entry. What could be simpler?

When you've answered all three questions, send your entry to us at: Dr Spanner's MPEG Compo, PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

All entries must reach us by the 4th of May 1995, when the winner will be drawn from a large cauldron of vegetables periodically stirred by the Sheffield United football team. Or something.

The Questions

1. MPEG stands for:
   (a) Motion Pictures Export Group.
   (b) Motion Pictures Expert Group.
   (c) Motion Pictures Expert Groupies.

2. The Movie Master 24 MPEG card is the most advanced MPEG card on the market because:
   (a) Ace Coin say so.
   (b) It's a 24-bit card and it can play VideoCDs and MPEG games in a resizable window in 16.7 million colours.
   (c) It's much smaller than it's competitors so it must be good.

3. FMV stands for:
   (a) Full-Motion Video.
   (b) Free Medieval Violence.
   (c) Fat Meandering Volvos.

This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images, their relatives or their friends or any employees of Ace Coin. The competition closes on the 4th of May 1995, and the winners will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternative prizes will be offered. The Editor's decision is absolutely final and no correspondence will be entered into. While every care is taken, we cannot accept any responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post. Sorry.

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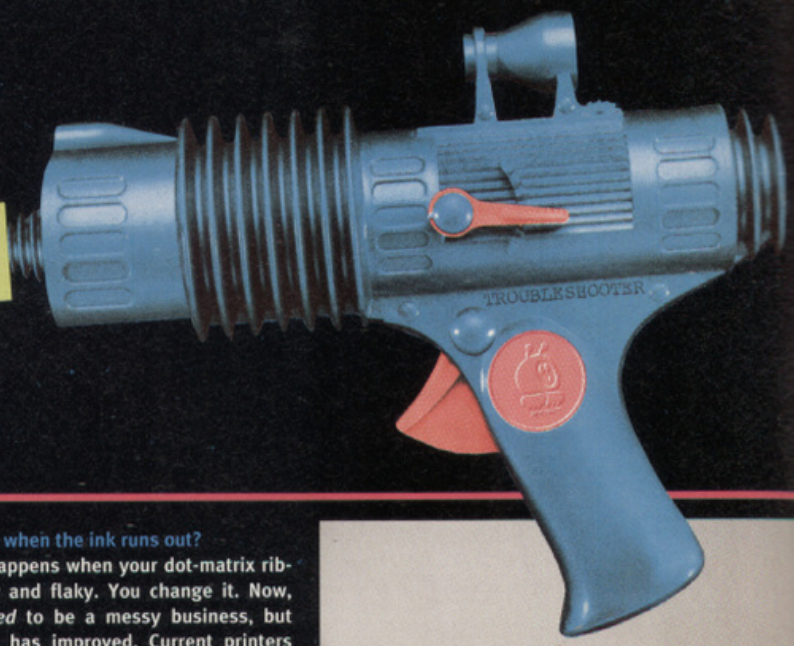
THE TROUBLE SHOOTER



It's Dithering of Darlington who's going doolally this month, with this tale of woe: "After ten years of faithful service, my dot-matrix printer has finally bitten the dust. I went off to the shops to buy a replacement, only to find that there hardly seems to be such a thing as a dot-matrix printer these days. Help! Do I want an inkjet? Do I need a laser printer?"

Calm down, Dithering. Okay, so the bad news is that you can't just replace your printer with a similar working model. The good news is that you can get something much better for your money. Technology's moved on, that's all. There are dot-matrix printers around, but frankly, they don't come any cheaper than inkjets and the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Tell me what you want to use the printer for and I'll steer you in the right direction.

I just want something cheap and cheerful to print out letters and essays — and notes, sometimes. I used to print out some of my schoolwork and now I want to do the same with my college work.

It sounds to me as though what you want is an ultra-cute little inkjet. If you're just going to be printing out text — no fancy graphics or desktop publishing with arty-farty pictures — then you don't need colour and that will keep the price down a bit. Having said that, pushing the boat out for a colour model won't cost you that much more, although the running costs aren't as efficient.

But I've heard that inkjet printers can be terribly messy. Aren't they the ones that squirt ink all over the paper and when it comes out you have to wave it around to dry it?

Er, not really. Well, they do squirt ink, but in such minute quantities that you're not going to get massive blots. The ink is pushed out of a series of tiny nozzles in the printhead to form a dot which makes up part of each letter. You could compare these to the pins in the printhead of a dot-matrix, but the nozzles really are much smaller — they're invisible to the naked eye.

In the olden days, ooh, all of five or six years ago, inkjet printers tended to need special paper, but with today's models you can use ordinary paper and you can also use continuous feed paper (you know, with the sprocket holes down the sides) because most printers come with a tractor feeder. Of course, if you use really shiny stuff you might find the ink tends to 'glide' a bit.

And what happens when the ink runs out?

Same thing that happens when your dot-matrix ribbon goes all grey and flaky. You change it. Now, changing ink *used* to be a messy business, but again, technology has improved. Current printers hold the ink in cartridges: you pop the old cartridge out and snap the new one in, and it's about as messy as a modern fountain pen.

Will this cartridge last for as long as my dot-matrix printer ribbons?

Ah, well, that depends on just how grey and flaky you let your print get before you give in and buy a new ribbon. Very roughly, I'd say the life of a ribbon and the life of a cartridge are comparable.

And will it print as quickly?

Again, it depends on the model you buy — some are faster than others, obviously. If your dot-matrix was a real whizzo in draft mode, then no, it won't be as fast as that, but it will probably be quicker than in near-letter-quality mode. In fact, given that your dot matrix is ten years old, make that *definitely*.

I ought to add as well that your letters and essays are going to look a whole lot better. Even though inkjets print a little bit like dot-matrixes in that they make letters composed of dots, the output quality is a huge step forward. You'll see inkjets being advertised as having laser-quality print and, although I don't think the output's ever as good as a comparable laser, they're not far off. Smaller dots, and more of them, you see.

So if I want the best output, I should really look at a laser printer?

There's no doubt that with a laser printer, you get the best-looking print, but I think you should bear two things in mind here. First, you said "cheap and cheerful", and you can easily pick up a very nice inkjet printer for under £200 — maybe under ú150 if you shop around. Even colour inkjets can be bought for around £200-£250. Even a cheap, cheap laser printer will be around £350 and most 'affordable' ones are around £500.

Secondly, if you've got your PC set up in your bedroom or in student accommodation, then I would guess you don't have much space. Laser printers are now much smaller than they used to be, but inkjets are really compact — a little inkjet will make your old dot-matrix look like a mammoth.

Okay, okay, but I want something that's going to last. Mightn't it be a good investment to get the best?

Look, I'm not a member of the anti-laser lobby and if you'd said you wanted to compile professional reports with charts and diagrams and DTP-ish sort of stuff, I'd probably have suggested a laser printer. But your requirements sound like they suit an inkjet.

If it's future-proofing that you're after, buy a good brand name and either buy a colour printer, or one with a colour option kit so you can add one later. Ask in the shop about the number of fonts available and about support for TrueType fonts (used in Windows) and Postscript — comes in handy with some software. Do a quick double-check about suitability of paper types (oh, and ask if it will print on acetate film, or overhead projector film. I know you don't want to do this, but it might help allay your fears about runny ink).

And who might these "good brand names" be?

Well, both Canon's BubbleJet range and Hewlett-Packard's DeskJets are practically synonymous with inkjet printing. But lots of other established printer manufacturers are in on the act as well, such as Epson and Olivetti. As ever, look in lots of shops, badger the sales assistants with questions, ask to see the printers in action, *then* settle on a type you want. And don't bust your budget!

Another problem eliminated — bag it and tag it, boys. If you've got a problem with your PC that needs a spot of troubleshooting, drop me a line and we'll talk it through. And when I'm not being the TroubleShooter, I've got a day job as editor of PC REVIEW, sister magazine to the very wonderful PC GAMES. PC REVIEW covers the whole gamut of PC entertainment and includes a Technical Help section, in which you can find more detailed versions of the articles which appear in this section.

LETTERS

Sad old Dave the Editor is a lonely man, so cheer him up by sending a letter to: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU? Alternatively, you can Fax him on: (0171) 972 6700, or e-mail him at: PCREVIEW@CIX.COMPULINK.CO.UK

Indy-credible!

Dear PC GAMES,

Being a big fan of LucasArts' brilliant graphic adventures — and of the wonderful Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis in particular (which I reckon is the best adventure ever written) — I was very interested by your preview of LucasArts' new Indy adventure, Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures.

But I have to say that I'm disappointed with what I've seen. I'd heard rumours for a long time that LucasArts was working on a new Indy game and I was greatly looking forward to it, but the last thing I expected them to release was a simplistic arcade adventure that looks like it'd more at home on a console than a PC.

If this is the direction LucasArts intends to take with its future adventures, then I for one won't be buying any more.

William Moores,
Leeds.

Whooah there, boy! Don't you think you ought to wait until after you've played Indy Desktop or at least read a few reviews before you consign it to the dumper? Yes, Indy Desktop is a departure from LucasArts' traditional adventure style — but that was always the idea. It's not meant to be a massive, takes-a-month-to-solve epic like Fate Of Atlantis, but a fun, pick-up-and-play lunchtime-waster.

And I don't think it's the beginning of a 'new direction' for LucasArts either — if you want an idea of where LucasArts is heading with its new graphic adventures, take a look at games like Full Throttle or The Dig.

Incidentally, on the subject of Indy, did you know that George Lucas is apparently working on a new movie currently entitled Indiana Jones And The Lost Continent? The Lost Continent... couldn't that be Atlantis? Wonder if it's got anything to do with the game? Only time will tell, I suppose...

You *Fools!*

Dear PC GAMES,

As a CyClones devotee, I have to disagree strongly with your review of the game in the last issue. By and large I think your reviews are spot-on, but in this case you're way off the mark. 40%? I'd give it 85% at least.

I agree with your reviewer that the control system is a little awkward at first, but it only takes a week or so of practice to get used to it. After that, I found it to be one of the most flexible and intuitive systems around, and the game itself to be the best Doom clone since, ooh, Doom 2. It makes me wonder just how much time and effort your reviewers spend playing the games you cover every month.

Brian Neils,
Swindon.

How much 'time and effort' do we spend playing the game we cover? Er, quite a lot actually. At PC GAMES we pride ourselves on giving every game we review a thorough going-over before we rate it — and as you yourself admit, our reviews are usually "spot-on", so we must be doing something right.

In the case of CyClones, however, I'm afraid we'll have to agree to disagree. While spending a "week or so" getting used to the control system might be just about excusable if the game in question was a ultra-complex strategy game or wargame, in the case of an action-orientated game like CyClones it's completely unforgiveable.

Of course, we don't expect every game to be instantly accessible and we don't mind having to go through a short learning curve before we can fully appreciate them, but at the end of the day it's our opinion that games should be fun to play. And where's the fun in wrestling with a duff control system?

Don't Buy 'Em! — STARLETTER

Dear PC GAMES,

Your magazine seems to receive a lot of letters from readers worried about the way software companies tend to write games that only work at optimum speed on a 66MHz 486/DX2 or Pentium. I agree that it *is* worrying — and annoying — but it seems to me that the power to stop them doing this is in our, i.e. the consumers, hands.

To put my case simply, don't buy the games. Take the recent success of Wing Commander 3, for example. I've got a couple of friends, one with a 25MHz 486 and one with a 33MHz 486, who went out and bought Wing 3 and then expressed dismay that the game was nearly unplayable on their systems. You and many other games magazines warned its readers that this was likely to be the case, but I bet many people — like my friends — still went out and bought the game anyway.

The result? Wing Commander 3 zooms to Number One in the charts, so Origin and the rest of the software companies get the green light to produce more ridiculously processor-hungry games and the punters have to put up with more games that don't play well on their under-powered PCs. However, if those people had kept their money in their wallets, then Wing 3 wouldn't have done as well and the industry would have been given a sign that we want games that work well on *our* PCs, not just the programmers' monster machines.

Peter King,
Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Although I understand what you're saying, Peter, the plain fact of the matter is that the PC games market is driven mainly by America, not the UK. Over in the States PC ownership is much higher than it is here and the PCs also tend to be far more powerful, so naturally the software companies tend to pander to their needs rather than ours.

I agree that your friends were a little foolish buying Wing 3 for their machines (which were actually less than the recommended minimum spec), but everybody wants to play the latest games. Trouble is, not everybody can afford the sorts of machines needed to play those games.

Compo *Complaint*

Dear PC GAMES,

I've been a regular reader of PC GAMES since the Issue 1, and I have never felt the need to complain about anything — until now.

My gripe is about the competition to win a quad-speed CD-ROM drive in your April Issue. Normally your competitions are easy-to-enter multiple-choice quizzes, but not this one — instead you had to match the pictures of aliens from X-COM: Terror From The Deep with their correct names.

The problem is, how am I meant to get the names right when I haven't played the game yet — it's not even out in the shops! Please can you try to make your competitions a bit fairer in the future?

Alan Firm,
Gravesend, Kent.

Oh come on, Alan — it wasn't that tough! The Lobster Man was pretty obvious, the Aquatoid's picture appears in the review and the other two only require the application of a little 'skill & judgement' to tell apart. Tsch! See? You try and do something different, and waddya get...?

Tips Are *Tops!*

Dear PC GAMES,

I'd like to congratulate you on an area of the mag that doesn't get praised very often — the tips. In a lot of other PC games magazines they often look like they've been put together in five minutes as an after-thought, but not in PC GAMES. Not only are they brilliantly helpful (especially the System Shock tips, although they went on a bit!), but they look superb too — the King's Quest VII tips last month looked beautiful! Keep up the good work!

Graham Chivers,
Milton Keynes.

Gee shucks. Thanks, Graham.

"I'd Buy A **Book!***"*

Dear PC GAMES,

What on Earth (no pun intended) was a feature about UFOs doing in last month's PC GAMES? I buy your magazine to read about games, games and more games, not some [er, rhymes with "trite" — Dave] about flying saucers. If I wanted to know anything about the "the whole UFO phenomenon" I'd buy a book, not PC GAMES. That aside, the mag was great.

Colm Brennan,
Belfast, Northern Ireland.

"Fascinating!"

Dear PC GAMES,

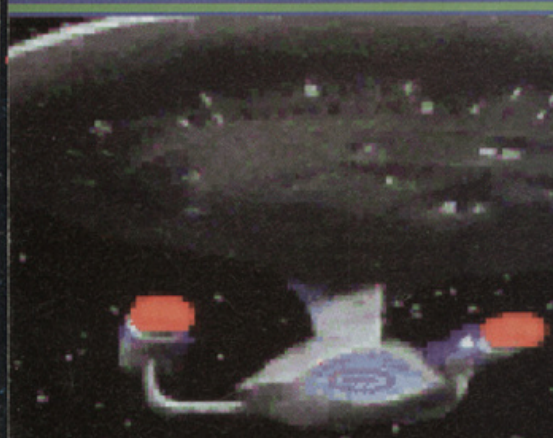
I was a bit surprised to see a feature on UFOs in the last issue of PC GAMES — it was the last thing expected to see in a computer games magazine. But I have to say that I found it quite fascinating, especially the bit about the 'Roswell Incident'.

Brian Glenholm,
Southend.

The idea behind the 'Have Raygun, Will Travel!' feature was to provide a little background about UFOs to tie in with the cover game, MicroProse's X-COM: Terror From The Deep. And you'll see that this month we've got a short feature about Aliens merchandise, to link in with our Aliens preview. We'll carry on doing features like this as long as the majority of readers find them interesting. What do other readers think? Are you a Brian or a Colm? Write in and tell us.

Talking of the 'Roswell Incident', I heard recently that secretly-recorded film clearly showing the crashed UFO and its alien occupants is about to made public. Spooky, eh?

NEXT MONTH

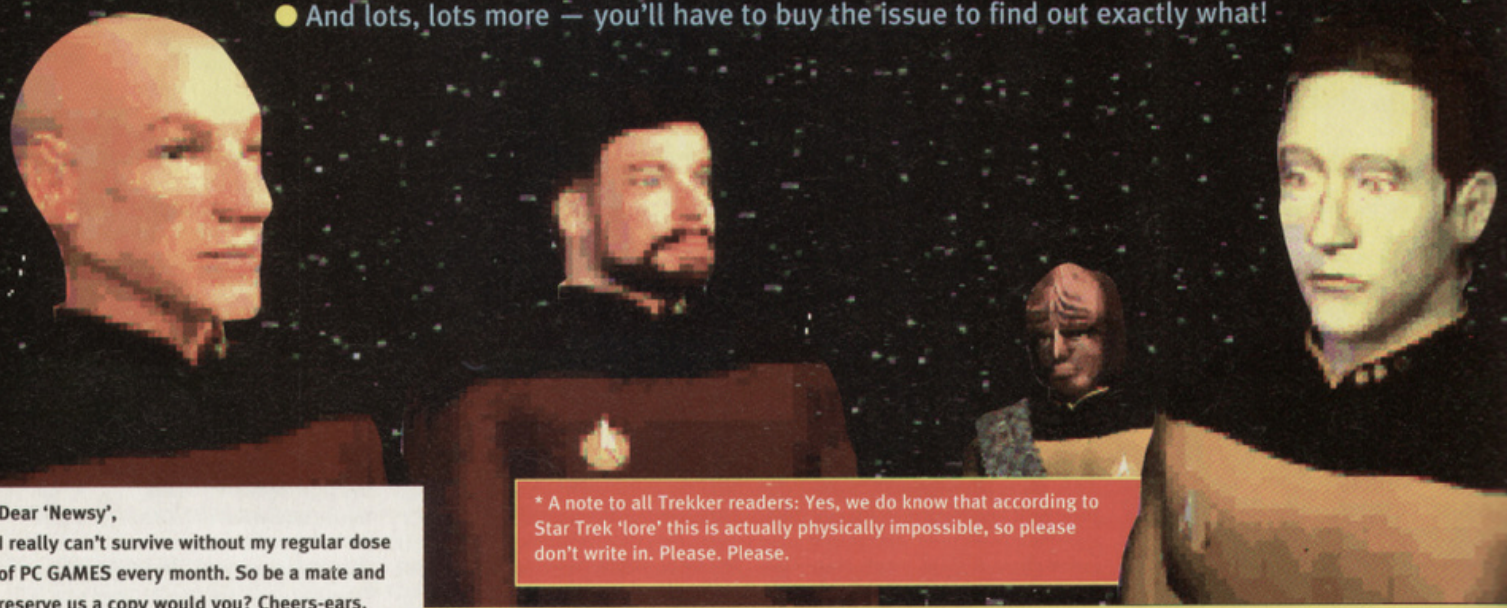


Make It So!

In the next issue we accelerate to Warp Factor 10* when we review MicroProse's eagerly-awaited Star Trek: The Next Generation! Yes, we'll be joining everyone's favourite baldy-in-charge, Captain Jean-Luc Picard, and the rest of the Enterprise's brave crew as they boldly go where no-one has gone before. Come with-us — it should be a nice day out if nothing else!

PLUS!

- Aliens — The epic saga continues in the second part of our exclusive preview!
- Special report on the new games at this year's European Computer Trade Show!
- Apache Longbow, Frontier: First Encounters, Dungeon Master 2, Tank Commander, Slipstream 5000 and Flight Unlimited (at last!) all reviewed!
- And lots, lots more — you'll have to buy the issue to find out exactly what!



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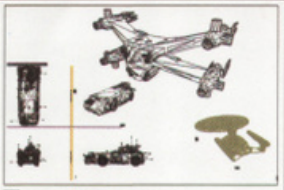

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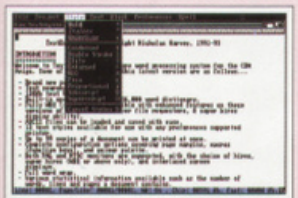

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